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STARBURST

THIS ISSUE WE PRESENT AN
**SF MOVIE
BONANZA!**

THE MAKING OF
SATURN 3
(WITH JIM DOUGLAS & FARRAH FAWCETT)

PLUS - REVIEWS OF
STAR TREK
THE MOTION PICTURE

DISNEY'S SF OFFERING
BLACK HOLE



AND THE LATEST DISASTER
METEOR!

LAND OF THE GIANTS

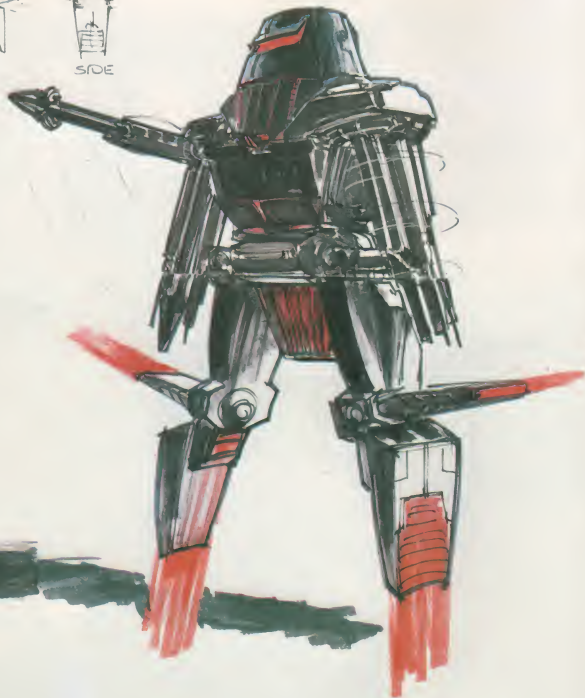
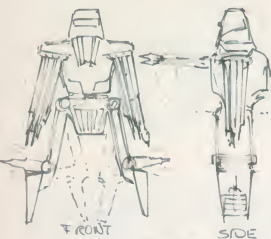
FANTASTIC VOYAGE

PLUS- VIEWS FROM
TOM BAKER,
SANDY HOWARD,
MAT IRVINE
AND DAN O'BANNON



THE BLACK HOLE See review on page 44

A STARBURST EXCLUSIVE. A NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN PRODUCTION DESIGN FOR THE MALEVOLENT LEADER OF THE ROBOTS OF THE STARSHIP CYGNUS, MAXIMILIAN. DESPITE THE FILM'S SHORTCOMINGS THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT THE HARDWARE IS SUPERIOR.



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STARBURST

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Volume 2, Number 7

Ever wanted to buy a science fiction magazine that had just about everything? Comments by scriptwriters, actors, special effects men, tv producers, movie producers and artists, plus retrospectives on old tv shows (like *Land of the Giants*) and movies (such as *Fantastic Voyage*), and reviews of current box office hits like *Star Trek*, *Black Hole* and *Meteor*, with news of upcoming s-f biggies in tv, movies and graphics thrown in? Well done... you've just bought it!

Der Skin

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STAR TREK THE MOTIO

AT LAST! MORE THAN TEN YEARS AFTER THE FINAL STAR TREK TELEVISION EPISODE WAS COMPLETED AT THE PARAMOUNT STUDIOS IN HOLLYWOOD, CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK COMMANDS THE ENTERPRISE ONCE MORE. AND GATHERING HIS CREW TOGETHER AGAIN, HE HEADS OUT INTO SPACE TO CONFRONT A DEADLY MENACE. BUT WILL THIS NEW, EXPENSIVE VERSION OF STAR TREK DISAPPOINT THE FANS OF THE OLD, TV SERIES? WE PRESENT A REVIEW BY STARBURST REGULAR, JOHN BROSNAN, WHO SEEMS TO THINK IT WILL.

To begin with I must admit I'm not the world's greatest fan of the Star Trek tv series. I mean, I *quite* like some of the episodes, the earlier ones mainly, and I think the original concept is a good one (it was, after all, based on one of my favourite sf movies, *Forbidden Planet*) but unlike your average Trekkie I don't consider the show to be the best thing to happen to science fiction since Mrs Wells gave birth to little Herbert George. In fact I often find the series to be banal, ludicrously simplistic, overly sentimental and far removed from what I consider to be good science fiction.

But, of course, science fiction — good or otherwise — has little to do with the success of the tv series. What the bulk of its fans, who tend to be young and female, find appealing about the show are the characters and the interplay (such as it is) between

them. Now as characters go, the ones in Star Trek aren't what you would call richly textured, three-dimensional beings. They are stereotypes, albeit *strong* stereotypes, easily recognisable from each other. They behave in reassuringly familiar ways each week (often they even say the same things each week, like: "We canna hold this orbit much longer, captain . . . the engines canna take the strain!" "They have to Scotty . . ." and "That is illogical, Captain"). The most interesting character and the one that sets most female hearts fluttering is, of course, Mr Spock.

Millions of words — well, hundreds at least — have been written about just why Leonard Nimoy's Mr Spock should have this effect on women. The theory that seems to provide the most likely explanation is the one put forward by writer Robert Bloch who suggests that Spock represents a kind

Below: Pictured from left to right, Leonard Nimoy, director Robert Wise, producer Gene Roddenberry, DeForest Kelley and William Shatner.



N PICTURE THE REVIEW

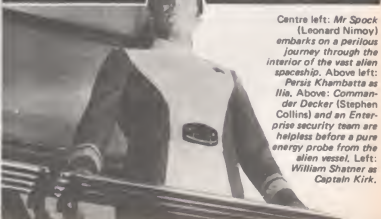


of challenge to women. Here is this exotic-looking man, half-human and half mysterious alien, who insists that he is ruled by logic and not emotions, thus implying that he is impervious to affairs of the heart. Now apparently the effect this has on women is akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull — they all want to prove him wrong.

As the series progressed and the producers and writers came to realise that the character of Spock was one of the key elements in the show more and more stories began to concentrate on the internal battle between his repressed humanity and his ruling code of logic. The writers were naturally firmly on the side of human emotions and it seemed that in almost every episode Spock would be forced to undergo some kind of emotional collapse, either breaking down in tears or having a fit of hysterics. Spock's personal dilemma came to symbolise

the series' main theme — the superiority of good, old-fashioned humanity with all its flaws and foibles over powerful but cold alien forces — but one can't help suspecting that his emotional tortures were also designed to provide a slightly sadistic form of titillation for his female fans.

In *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* Spock undergoes the ritual emotional breakdown near the end of the picture but that's about the only thing that will provide his fans with anything approaching titillation. In fact I suspect that fans of the series as a whole will be disappointed by this long-awaited production, simply because the characters themselves are neglected in favour of the special effects. All the old familiar faces are there, even minor ones like Grace Lee Whitney as Janice Rand, but they aren't given much to do except sit around and recite the gobbledegook jargon ("Captain, we are



Centre left: Mr Spock (Leonard Nimoy) embarks on a perilous journey through the interior of the vast alien spaceship. Above left: Persis Khambatta as Ilia. Above: Commander Decker (Stephen Collins) and an Enterprise security team are helpless before a pure energy probe from the alien vessel. Left: William Shatner as Captain Kirk.

ten microns past Jupiter and the continuum thruster has back-fired!"). Even the main characters, with the exception of Kirk, are ignored and, after their initial reintroductions, tend to recede into the background in order to let the special effects overpower everything in their path.

It's all very strange. After years of procrastination Paramount sees the light and finally admits there is still a lot of money to be made out of the Star Trek phenomenon, but instead of doing the logical thing — giving the fans what they want, a picture about their favourite characters — the Paramount executives apparently decided to try to out-do Star Wars and Close Encounters. And to do that, they figured, what you need is bigger and better special effects . . . so there are lots and lots of shots of big space

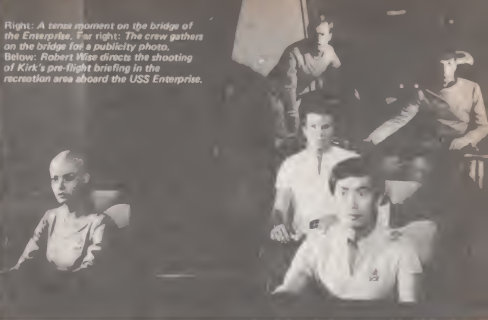
The special effects were allowed to take over the picture instead of being there to support the story.

ships a la Star Wars and a vast alien spacecraft that was obviously inspired by the mother ship in Close Encounters.

The problem is that the special effects in Star Trek, though technically impressive, with the exception of the early sequences set in San Francisco (this section includes one of the worst matte paintings I've seen in a long time), aren't very exciting. The reason for this, I think, is that they were allowed to take over the picture instead of being there to support the story. The effects in Star Wars, for instance, didn't slow down that picture in the way that Star Trek's effects do. And the mother ship in Close Encounters provided a visual climax to the film's build-up of suspense. But the alien ship in Star Trek doesn't dazzle at all, it just gives the impression of being very, very long. As mile after mile of it drifted into view through the green murk I stopped being impressed by the special effects and just started hoping they would get to the end of it as soon as possible.

Right: A tense moment on the bridge of the Enterprise. Far right: The crew gathers on the bridge for a publicity photo.

Below: Robert Wise directs the shooting of Kirk's pre-flight briefing in the recreation area aboard the USS Enterprise.





I experienced a similar emotion earlier in the movie when Captain Kirk was being given a guided tour around the Enterprise in a small shuttle craft piloted by Scotty. We see the Enterprise from the front, we see it from the top, we go very slowly along the length of one side and then we go very slowly along the other side, the camera caressing every inch of the ship in a way that made me feel like voyeur. "Enough already!" I mentally protested as the sequence went on and on, "I admit it's a very impressive model but I've seen all I want to see!"

Star Trek has cost something in the region of thirty million dollars (*actually it was more, see Things to Come* — Ed.) and most of that sum was spent on the effects. Douglas (*Close Encounters*) Trumbull and John (*Star Wars*) Dykstra headed the huge army

Douglas (*Close Encounters*) Trumbull and John (*Star Wars*) Dykstra headed an army of effects technicians.

of effects technicians (I counted over two hundred names in the credits for the special effects alone) but one can't help wishing that the same amount of effort and care had been lavished on the script. Though based on a treatment by sf writer Alan Dean Foster (best known for his novelisations of *Star Wars* and *Alien*) which in turn was based on a couple of *Star Trek* episodes, the actual screenplay was written by Harold Livingston who has admitted he wasn't familiar with the tv series at all. And so both Gene Roddenberry and Leonard Nimoy apparently made uncredited contributions to the script in an attempt to insert "characterisation". Livingston's lack of familiarity with *Star Trek* no doubt explains why the characters have less substance in the movie than they did in the tv series. Presumably the Paramount executives reasoned that an outsider like Livingston would provide an extra dimension and thus ensure that the film wouldn't appeal merely to the show's fans but to an even larger audience. If so I think their plan has badly misfired. Admittedly



the film is breaking box office records at the moment but I suspect that in the long run it will prove to be something of a financial failure (it has to gross about 80,000,000 dollars just to break even).

The finished script is, to put it mildly, rather dire. The dialogue is generally banal and the whole thing moves with the pace of a hobbled snail. The plot is simple: a large cloud containing an alien spaceship is detected heading towards Earth, so the Enterprise, with its old crew reunited for the occasion, goes out to intercept it. Kirk and friends eventually discover that the alien is a pure machine intelligence but once again good old human emotions triumph over cold logic and the day is saved. In a sense, like so many recent sf movies, *Star Trek* is more of a religious movie than an sf one and even ends with two of its characters moving onto a "higher plane of existence" amid a colourful explosion of transcendental fireworks (amusingly, Disney's *Black Hole* has a similar epiphol).

Science itself doesn't get much of a look-in despite the presence of Isaac Asimov in the credits as "Special



Above: A scene which didn't appear in the final movie. When Spock ventures out into the heart of the alien ship, Kirk follows him and is attacked by tiny pyramids which appear to be the alien ship's answer to antibodies. In the version showing in our cinemas Kirk recovers the unconscious Spock but is not attacked by antibodies.

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Science Consultant". What is "special science"? one wonders. Perhaps it has something to do with the sequences where we see various characters watching, on tv monitors, action that is supposedly taking place light years away (the destruction of the Klingon space cruiser and the space station by the space cloud) without any indication of where these pictures are coming from or what is transmitting them. Special science indeed! Perhaps the good Doctor Asimov invented some miraculous device, like an "omniscience" for the purpose.

Another absurdity concerns the actual speed of the alien cloud thing. When it is first sighted it is on the edge of the Klingon empire and calculated to reach Earth a mere three days later, which means it must be travelling at faster-than-light speeds. Yet we see the three Klingon ships approach it from the opposite direction, thus revealing that it is moving very slowly indeed. This impression is reinforced when we later see it slowly engulfing a stationary space station. Complaining about such things is, I know, a waste of time. Audiences don't give a damn so why should the film makers?

I imagine the chief source of interest for the Trekkies is in seeing how their favourites have withstood the passage of time since the last tv



Left: The mechanical copy of Ilia (Persis Khambatta) fails to recognise Decker (Stephen Collins). Below left: Spock (Leonard Nimoy) at his station on the bridge. Bottom: Spock, Kirk and McCoy look on in horror as the alien, V'ger, begins its final transformation.

Star Trek (1979)

William Shatner (as Capt James T. Kirk), Leonard Nimoy (Mr Spock), DeForest Kelley (Dr McCoy), James Doohan (Scotty), George Takei (Sulu), Majel Barrett (Dr Chapel), Walter Koenig (Chekov), Nichelle Nichols (Uhura), Persis Khambatta (Ilia), Stephen Collins (Decker), Grace Lee Whitney (Janice Rand), Mark Lenard (Klingon Captain).

Directed by Robert Wise, Screenplay by Harold Livingston, Story by Alan Dean Foster, Director of Photography Richard H. Kline, Production Design Herold Michelson, Edited by Todd Ramsay, Music by Jerry Goldsmith, Special Photographic Effects Directed by Douglas Trumbull, Special Photographic Effects Supervised by John Dykstra, Special Science Consultant Isaac Asimov, Produced by Gene Roddenberry.

Time: 137 mins

Cert: U



series was made. After all, some of them are getting a bit long in the tooth now: DeForest Kelley is 59, William Shatner is 48 and Leonard Nimoy is 47. Well, Kelley and Nimoy are understandably looking a little ravaged these days (even Spock's ears don't look as healthy as they used to) but for some strange reason Shatner seems to be getting younger. Perhaps it's his new hair-piece. The other members of the team don't seem to have changed much either, George Takei as Sulu and Walter Koenig as the wet Chekov are about the same but the one I was most pleased to see appearing to defeat the passing of the years was the delectable Nichelle Nichols as Uhura.

Overall, though, *Star Trek - The Motion Picture* is a definite disappointment. Basically it is just an episode from the series inflated by the lavish special effects to fill a running time of over 130 minutes. There are a few good moments in it but on the whole it is slow, boring and even turgid at times. It ends on a note that suggests that there is more to come. Whether it will be in the form of another movie or a new tv series apparently has yet to be decided but whatever it is I trust that Paramount will allow the emphasis to be returned to the people instead of the special effects.

THE WHO INTERVIEW



TOM BAKER AND GRAHAM WILLIAMS TALK TO JOHN FLEMING ABOUT THE LONGEST- RUNNING SF TV SHOW ON BRITISH TELEVISION

Starburst: *When you became Dr Who, were you worried about being type-cast?*
Baker: I don't think you think about those sort of things when you're mixing cement. (Laughs) At £26 a week, you don't think about it. You just long for anything at all.

Starburst: *The pressure of the Dr Who shooting schedule must be tremendous.*
Baker: There are massive redeeming features. One is that one gets rather well paid for it — And I can't over-emphasise that (laughs). But the thing is that it is also terrific fun to do, you see. Because it's a big licence to have an awful lot of fun and to be fantastical, which you

"I've noticed I'm actually now obsessed with the fantastic area of comedy and improbability."

couldn't possibly get in . . . I mean, the real thing that worries me is how I would make the transition from the freedom and fun I've had on Dr Who to something 'real'. Because you get very heavily influenced by the style of the work you do, like anybody. I've noticed I'm actually now totally obsessed with the

fantastical area of comedy and improbability. It's true. I'm absolutely obsessed with the improbable.

Starburst: *That's not a bad thing, is it?*
Baker: It's a very good thing at the moment, because that's entirely what my life is about. But I sometimes wince at the thought of what will happen when I work with some 'serious' director who's saying, "Now, two inches to the left, Tom". I couldn't do an emotional scene for him, looking into a looking glass.

Starburst: *You're in the position now of creating your own framework and using your own imagination to play the part the way you want it. A lot of licence.*

Williams: The situation's even more unique, because Tom not only can bring those elements to the part but has to. We

are utterly dependent on the individual actor's portrayal of that part.

Baker: Also, you can, if you're positive, help the directors in some ways. (*Different directors direct different stories.*) I'm the only week-by-week link so, when a new director takes over and says, "This will be the set-up," I'm the only one who can actually in detail remind him that the fortnight before we actually duplicated the same set-up. I know a lot about set-ups in corridors and stopping on corners (laughs). And irrational reasons for stopping. That's the lovely alchemy of being an actor. You turn this very difficult stage direction into some kind of

"The character of The Doctor was always me. Was always Pat Troughton. Was always Jon."

dramatic goal which it doesn't actually inherently contain. The reason why we stop on corners is because we've run out of corridor. (Laughs) *We can't* do long tracking dialogue shots. And the reason why I actually sometimes go on my knees is because, when the camera pans there, the scenery's only that high. You can't do high shots because you'd be in the lights. All these things are very funny to do. If you establish a good working relationship with your (production) office, you become more than just The Actor trying to bring his expertise. You actually become very involved. And, if that's in predicting what the companions will be. Inventing their characters and still leaving room for development is rather positive, it's a massive bonus. I'm licensed by our office — by Graham, who employs me, and the directors I've built up relationships with (laughs). I mean, occasionally they send me for tea to shut me up. But they actually put up with me trying to influence the thing because most of them, I hope, do believe that it's an attempt to help and to make it fresh and new.

Starburst: *Have you actually changed the character of your Doctor over the years?*

Baker: I don't think so. I think finally, in this sort of thing, you're only filtering the personality. Because of the inability to develop (due to audience resistance) it's not in the strict way an acting part — that it can be surprising or radically different in any way. It was always me. It was always Pat Troughton. It was always Jon (Pertwee).

Williams: The more difficult side of it from our point of view — the scripting side before we even start the season — is

Opposite centre: Graham Williams receives his Starburst Award at the Fantasy Film Convention last year. Below: The Doctor and Sarah (Elisabeth Sladen) face a horrifying vegetable monster, The Krynoid. Right: The Doctor in the official robes of a Time Lord.



Left: *The Doctor* (Tom Baker) is captured by Captain Rossini (Anthony Carrick) in the Masque of Mandragora episode of *Doctor Who*.



more difficult. Once you've got Tom in the show, you can really leave the part in his hands, given that we don't present him with too much of a load of garbage week after week. We try and help him in that way. But helping the companions is that much more difficult because they come into the whole thing, obviously, with a tense and nervous attitude. Because they know it's been running such a long time and Tom has worked his way into the part and made it his own. And it's continually difficult to support them as well. Sometimes we can do it successfully; sometimes we have to depend on them rather more than we'd like to. Lalla (Ward) is doing a smashing job this year and Mary (Tamm), given the parameters

home from work on the train last night, I made three tube changes and all the kids were coming back from (The Great Children's Party in) Hyde Park with their mothers and everything. They were so densely packed and I was threading my way through and, quite often, a child is actually being led towards me and he recognises me and he smiles and then he wonders why he smiled. And then it clicks (who I am) and by the time it's

Below: *The Doctor* goes shooting in the sewers beneath nineteenth century London in *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*.



"When people try to plagiarise us, they fall down because it is an obvious piece of plagiarism."

of the role last year, did a super job.

Baker: Given fundamental expertise from the producer downwards, the real gold of the thing is the formula. Given that you haven't got a bonehead at the top or a powerful subversive somewhere down the line, you couldn't really fall with it. The first reason why we are so successful — the very first reason — is that we are incomparable. Nothing admits to comparison with *Dr Who*. When people try to plagiarise our situations or our attitudes, they fall down because it is an obvious piece of plagiarism. They don't really start with this marvellous thing that the character's alien and the wonderful heroic comedy-thriller notion that he can travel in this daft box. That's why I think the formula, which is so wonderful, engages such a huge audience.

Starburst: Especially children?

Baker: Sometimes I enjoy being recognised. Especially by children. It gets very debilitating when you're accosted by adults all the time. But *children* — I love it, especially if I'm on the move. Going

clicked I've gone. It's terrific fun that kind of contact. Great fun. I love it with the *small* children — it's amazing that. **Starburst:** *Children love the programme, don't they?*

Baker: You see, to use a very overworked word, it's a participatory programme. In your average family of a man and his wife and three children, with the children going (in age) from about nine to three, when it comes to Saturday night viewing it becomes a bit of a charade. Children are very quick to cotton on to some kind of regular routine. So, when they watch *Dr Who*, several things happen. It's not passive in a two or three-child family. The older child of nine or ten might be actually following the narrative very carefully and quite critically. His six-year-old brother, when the monsters come up, is winning a bit. And the little fellow, getting in on this act, is behind the sofa or he's in the kitchen looking through the crack in the door. Now, the parents

"The opening music of *Doctor Who* is absolutely wonderful — it's a signal for a weekly sit-down."

notice this and enjoy it. I've talked to hundreds of parents: they enjoy this. The moment you actually give children that attention — just like, indeed, adults — you get this marvellous response. When our music comes up — and the opening music to *Dr Who* is absolutely wonderful — that's the signal for the weekly sit-down and the sharing; and young Toby's behind the sofa or the little girl's on her dad's knee. The whole thing is very enjoyable for an ordinary family.

Williams: There used to be that same thing with the classic children's serial on a Sunday afternoon. I think that's gone now, because they keep on swapping times around. They've destroyed that

Below: *The Doctor* and Sarah (Elisabeth Sladen) are pursued by the deadly vegetable known as the *Krynoid* in *The Seeds of Doom*.





Above: Tom Baker and Lalla Ward (as the new Romana) pose for a publicity photo.



Right: *The Doctor and Romana* (Mary Tamm) at the controls of the *TARDIS*. Below: *In Terror of the Zygons* The Doctor discovers an alien race living at the bottom of Loch Ness.

loyalty which certainly my generation grew up with — watching Lorna Doone, followed by *Treasure Island*, followed by . . .

Baker: And, to be fair, the slot the BBC has kept for *Dr Who* over the years, more or less . . .

Williams: Within twenty minutes . . .

Baker: It's a brilliant slot. People's metabolism changes in the week, doesn't it? One feels different on a Monday to what one feels on a Friday — and on a Saturday night particularly. It's sort of anticipation night. Even if you're going to stay in, you hope that the phone'll ring or the wine'll be good or you'll be in good form. All the sport is over. The news headlines have gone and no-one's got to

Grayson's Generation Game.

Baker: That's a good example in that the formula of *The Generation Game* was as big as the presenter. Given that the person is charming and warm, anyone can do it. In *Dr Who*, it's been done four times. The people who remember Bill Hartnell think *God, that was absolutely wonderful*. Then Pat came on and there was a barrage of criticism for him playing



*"In its first week *The Incredible Hulk* knocked off more than 2 million viewers."*

get to the pub that early. It's a suspenseful hour. And when you think of the programming — certainly the season before last — when it used to run Basil Brush, *Dr Who*, *Generation Game*, *Duchess of Duke Street*, *Two Ronnies*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Match of the Day* — it was simply wonderful programming. Who was going to switch over?

Williams: It's got to be a compliment to the programme that London Weekend in particular spends thousands of pounds and thousands of thousands trying to knock us out of those ratings.

Baker: Well, that one *Spaca* . . .

Williams: *Spaca 1999*.

Baker: Right. That was knocked out of its slot in about four weeks.

Williams: Even more spectacular was when they put *The Incredible Hulk* against us. In the first week, it knocked off more than two million (viewers). In the second week, it made no impression at all. They put it on another day and it went to number two (in the ratings).

Starburst: It was interesting that *Bruce Forsyth's Big Night* failed against *Larry*

this daft fellow with a pipe. But suddenly bang — and he was in. He goes. Jon comes in all of a glitter. He did it. Then I come in the absolute antithesis of Jon. My judgement's not so wonky that I'd ever mistake me for the formula.

Williams: I'm in exactly the same situation. The only real error I could have made and I hope I haven't made so far would be to try and have the programme compete on other programmes' terms. If we went into a massive amount of model work and fantastic locations and huge sets and vast expense, we'd just be aping their shows. We've got such a unique situation — That's our mother lode and that's what we're going to keep on digging away at. Let the others fight out amongst themselves for the best model shots or the best scenery.

Baker: It took fifty minutes of television to transform my life. I was totally unknown. In fifty minutes over a fort-

night — two episodes — I was a national figure. And, after about seven episodes, the hostility of the audience not liking the change ended and suddenly it was: "Hey! He's very funny, isn't he, Dad? Look at those big eyes he's got!"

Williams: The comparatively small amount of critical letters we get are from people of our age who, having grown up with *Dr Who* over the last 15 years, say: "Well, it's not like it was 15 years ago". Well, it's not because *they're* not what they were like 15 years ago. It's so much more sophisticated now, so much more intellectual and complicated. Have a look

"If we put on now the same effects we were using 15 years ago, the audience would feel cheated."

in your newspaper at Christmas and see all those stocking-fillers: CALCULATORS SUITABLE FOR SIX YEAR OLDS AND ONWARDS. I mean, when I was six I wasn't having anything bigger than an abacus — and even that was a bit complicated. It's only the (script) vehicles that have changed: the way in which one explains things.

Baker: And also the tools. Every other week, we're hiring new equipment.

Williams: If we were to put on now the same effects we were using 15 years ago, the audience would feel cheated. You've got to make some effort to keep the magic going.

Starburst: Outside the studio as well as inside?

Baker: Well, a successful actor in television is licensed by the character he plays. If Stratford Johns — I don't know him — but if Stratford Johns is in an alehouse and someone comes up to him and says, "Are you Barlow?" and he says "Yes, I am," and they say, "Can I have your autograph, please?" and he says "Get lost, I'm drinking with my friends," then I think the general reaction would be: "Great! He's just like he is on the telly!" Now, you see, I'm licensed only to be benevolent. So I have to put up with people — And I do, willingly, because in no situation that I can imagine would I

Above left: The Doctor plays chess with the computer dog, K-9 as Romana (Mary Tamm) looks on.

Above right: A frame from the illustrated story Timeslip in Doctor Who Weekly, published by Marvel Comics. Script and art by Paul Neary from a plot by Starburst editor Dez Skinn.

Below left: Tom Baker pictured at The World Science Convention, Seacon, at Brighton in 1979.

Below right: The Doctor is stung by a Zygon in the Doctor Who episode Terror of the Zygons.

disappoint anyone because it's usually about children. So, even though the fellow be the biggest bore in Europe, I've got to put up with him. I'm only licensed to be benevolent and amusing. So I can disappear without an explanation. Somehow or another, that's acceptable because people really don't want actors — the big figures that entertain us — to be like us. I don't think we do, anyway. When, sometimes, I hear stories about very big actors I admire — about their tastes or their behaviour — I'm frequently disappointed because, while it makes good gossip, it annihilates pre-conceptions. I don't want to know that some



actor's only 5ft 3in or that he's insufferably rude. It impinges on my pre-conceptions, which are happy pre-conceptions.

Starburst: All because of journalists.

Baker: There are these guys all over the place in the press and in magazines actually phrase-making, intellectualising.

Williams: Some of the most uncaring criticism we've ever come in for, I think,





HELP
YOURSELF
TO A
JELLYBABY,
K-9...

... AND APPLY
YOUR BRAINPOWER
TO THE STAR
CHARTS!

NEGATIVE,
MASTER, POSSESS
NO DIGESTIVE
MECHANISM.

NOW LET ME
SEE - FOURTEEN
PARSECS EAST BY
NORTHEAST OF THE
CRAB NEBULA HEAD-
ING FOR URSA MINOR
... THAT PUTS US ...

AFFIRMATIVE,
MASTER, COMPUTER
BRAIN FULLY
OPERATIVE.



has been at the hands of the fans themselves. The really biting criticism, that I don't think even the hardest-nosed pro would stoop to — in the most patronising terms — is from the fans, usually aged between 18 and 20, who put pen to paper and are insufferably pompous and patronising about a particular episode. Baker: I don't know what the age-group is, but there's a group of fans who become so proprietorial about the formula and the star that they become ...

Williams: It's when they say so-and-so's performance this week wasn't quite as good as last week but we do realise that the BBC makes these programmes under tremendous pressure and ...

Baker: The other assumption these partisan fans make is that they assume that I, as the actor who's at the front, am as interested and pre-occupied with science fantasy or science fiction as they are. I meet people who reel off these titles or they ask my opinion about certain things and they obviously know more about the history of the programme than I do. Because I'm not really — except in the informed way of not subverting anything — interested very much in what Pat did or Jon did. We're playing it from absolute moment to moment, holding on by our fingertips with the pressure of time and money and

everything.

Williams: I mean, you and I only keep marginally in the back of our minds what we did last year ...

Baker: Yeah.

Williams: Let alone five years ago or ten years ago.

Baker: Not interested in that.

Williams: The audience aren't very interested in that either.

"What the fans are conceding is that they don't understand actors and programme-makers."

Baker: What those fans are conceding is they don't understand actors and programme-makers. What's in the past is in the past. Each one you try to make history with — THIS ONE IS THE BEST ONE.

Williams: If we stuck *religiously* to points of continuity, of what we'd done before, the series would still be exactly where it was 15 years ago. You can't change a programme over-night. I don't think any audience could be expected to wear that — it wouldn't be fair on them. But, I think, in my years with the show, the changes we've made have been quite significant. It's only changed 15 or 20% a year, so it's still within the acceptable framework of the programme, but nevertheless it's moved on.

Probably the Starburst contributor most qualified to review this film is John Baxter whose novel *The Hermes Fall* also concerned a large asteroid on a collision course with Earth, but as no one has made a movie based on his book yet it is doubtful if he would be able to maintain the necessary amount of objectivity. In fact it's possible that seeing *Meteor* would cause him to lose his temper and throw his typewriter out the window. It's that type of movie.

It's a real pity that the producers of *Meteor* didn't buy the rights to John's book because at least then they would have had a story to film. There is *no* story in *Meteor*. It is simply about a large asteroid fragment hurtling towards Earth and being destroyed at the last moment by nuclear missiles,

Below: Karl Malden is trapped in the flooded tunnels of the New York underground.



though some smaller fragments actually do hit Earth. That's all there is to it. The reason for this is that *Meteor* began its life not as a novel or an original screen treatment but as an article by science fiction writer Isaac Asimov about space stations. For some reason this inspired *Meteor*'s co-producer Ted Parvin to think about what would happen if a large meteor should hit the Earth. This gives some indication of how film producers' minds work. Presumably if Parvin had read an article by Asimov on meteors (and Asimov has written on this subject) he would have made a film about the sinking of the Titanic.

Anyway, Parvin went to his partner Arnold Orgolini (a man with an "upbeat personality" according to the publicity handout) and said, "What a wonderful idea for a movie!" Thanks to his upbeat personality Orgolini immediately saw that the idea of a large chunk of rock hitting the Earth *would* make a great movie and away they went. You would imagine that the first thing they did then was hire a writer to create a story around this idea but no — what they did was hire an *artist* to draw a picture showing what New York would look like after being hit by a meteor. In movie parlance this is called

METEOR...A DIS

DESPITE THE GLOWING REPORTS FROM *METEOR* PRODUCER SANDY HOWARD IT SEEMS THAT SCRIPT REVISIONS AND THE REFILMING OF THE SPECIAL EFFECTS HAVE WEAKENED THE MOVIE RATHER THAN STRENGTHENED IT, ACCORDING TO REVIEWER JOHN BROSNAH.

turning an idea into a "concept". It was this and other sketches that enabled them to raise the necessary development money to get the film underway. It was only *then* that they approached veteran Hollywood script writer Edmund H. North, who wrote the screenplay for the classic sf movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still* among others, and asked him to write a treatment for the film, which he did.

No film ever had the impact of...

METEOR
Production begins this



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Screenplay by Edmund H. North. Producers, Theodore R. Parvin and Arnold Orgolini • A

ASTROUS MOVIE

North's treatment, along with the artwork, was instrumental in the producers securing the remainder of the necessary financial backing at the 1976 Cannes Film Festival and North was then given the go-ahead to write a complete script for *Meteor*. But from the very beginning not everyone seemed happy with the result and shortly afterwards a writer

called Steven Bach was called in to "doctor" it. Then British director Ronald Neame (*The Poseidon Adventure*) joined the project and he immediately expressed dissatisfaction with the *new* version. Another writer was brought in — Stanley Mann, a friend of one of the Executive Producers and also a close friend of Sean

Connery. Mann approached Connery about starring in the film but Connery didn't like the script either and agreed with Neame that Bach's contributions weren't satisfactory. So the screenplay was rewritten *again*, this time by Neame himself in collaboration with Stanley Mann (only Mann and North are mentioned in the credits) and finally a version that everyone liked was produced. However a viewing of the finished film leads one to believe that they stopped

Sean Connery and Natalie Wood. Left: The original concept art for *Meteor*.



...experience in terror created for world-wide entertainment.
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rewriting at least ten drafts too soon or should have gone back to the beginning and started all over again.

The above provides part of the explanation as to why the script of *Meteor* seems somewhat ramshackle in style. One gets the impression that everyone, including the clapper boy, made a contribution along the way. Sean Connery's lines in particular are not in context with the rest of the picture and one suspects he wrote them himself. But among the countless number of people who apparently worked on the script it's unfortunate that none of them knew anything about astronomy or science in general. There is a NASA technical adviser listed in the credits but there's no indication that anyone listened to a word he may have said. As a result *Meteor* has all the scientific authenticity of an episode of *Space 1999*...

It seems that the makers of most science fiction movies have the idea that outer space covers an area only slightly larger than the Atlantic Ocean... and the makers of *Meteor* are no exception. Near the beginning of the film we see a spaceship, *Challenger 2*, in the vicinity of Mars. The crew receive instructions from Earth to make a detour to the asteroid

belt to witness the passing of a new comet, so off they go and within a few hours, it seems, they are merrily guiding their craft between the large chunks of rock that make up the asteroid belt. And unless my eyes deceived me, there is even a shot of the ship passing *through the centre* of an asteroid shaped like a doughnut! This gives the impression that the asteroid belt is almost next door to Mars when in reality it is about a hundred million miles further out in space.

Anyway, no sooner does the spaceship arrive than the comet crashes into an asteroid called Orpheus, causing it to explode into a large number of pieces of varying size, several of which head directly towards Earth. (We'll ignore the fact that a comet isn't much more than a collection of frozen gases and ice and is unlikely to possess the necessary mass to shatter an asteroid of that size.) Now the first flaw in this scenario is that it doesn't take account of the fact that the Earth is constantly moving in orbit around the sun and therefore will be millions of miles away by the time the meteor arrives. In fact a chart of the meteor's progress repeatedly displayed during the movie gives the impression that the Earth has a fixed position in space.

The other big flaw is that the chunk of rock only takes seven days to reach Earth, travelling at 30,000 miles per hour. Now any schoolboy would have been able to tell the script-writers that their sums were a little suspect. For instance, an object travelling from Mars, which lies in an orbit 49 million miles from Earth's, at that speed would take at least 69 days to reach Earth (and that's assuming that the two planets are in conjunction). Now remember the asteroid belt lies millions of miles *beyond* Mars... which means that the meteor would have taken at least 200 days to make the journey travelling at 30,000 mph.

But even more absurd is that some of the smaller pieces of the asteroid reach Earth in only *three days*! One presumes that the writers are under the impression that the smaller bits would move faster because of lower wind resistance. And no doubt the reason why the first fragment lands in Northern Siberia is that the Arctic circle is nearer to outer space than the rest of the world...

All this could have been avoided if the makers of *Meteor* had taken advantage of the fact that some asteroids have elliptical orbits that occasionally bring them very close to Earth. The asteroid called Hermes, utilised by John Baxter in his novel, actually comes closer to the Earth than the moon itself, and in astronomical terms that is *very* close. It would have been much more logical to simply have the comet *deflect* one of these closer asteroids so that it ended up on a

collision course with Earth all within the time span required. But no, the makers wanted to include their shots of the asteroid belt and to hell with logic.

And speaking of those particular shots brings me to the unfortunate subject of the special effects. Apparently when the Meteor executives saw the first attempt by the effects men to recreate the



Brian Keith plays a Russian scientist.

asteroid belt they cried, "Why, that's Kibble!" — Kibble being a dry dog food. Not being too familiar with Kibble myself I can't say if the new asteroid footage is an improvement on the original but I wasn't overly impressed by it, or any of the other special effects in the film.

In fact, to judge by the special effects alone, it's hard to believe that *Meteor* cost 17,000,000 dollars! Compared to recent big effects movies like *Close Encounters* and *Superman* it looks very poor indeed, even though a large number of Hollywood effects men were involved with the production at various times (apparently the special effects underwent more revisions than the script). At one point the two effects men supervising the optical and miniature effects were Frank Vand der Veer, an industry veteran, and Bill Cruise, a relative newcomer. The publicity hand-outs described the pair's abilities in the following glowing terms: "Many a film had been saved by their ability to destroy buildings, cities, even entire planets! They both brought their annihilating capabilities into play for *Meteor*!"

Well, so much for their "annihilating capabilities" because their names don't even *appear* in the list of credits for *Meteor*. Nor do the names of the two effects technicians, Robbie Balack and Jamie Shourt, brought in just two months before the film was due to be completed to reshoot some of the effects. Just what percentage of the effects sequences were actually redone I have no idea. I do know that Ronald Neame and the producers wanted to scrap footage of both the tidal wave in Hong Kong and the avalanche in the Austrian Alps but as the sequences still appear very unconvincing in the

finished film one can't tell whether one is watching the original footage or the second or third attempt...

Footage that was reshot by Balack and Shourt included the sequences of the firing of the American and Russian missiles from the orbiting space stations but even so it remains unimpressive. Not only are the models badly constructed but they are lit in a very unrealistic way (due to the lack of air in space contrasts between light and shadow are always very sharp — see Derek Medding's miniatures in *Moonraker* for an example of how it should be done). The problem is that these missiles play a very important part in the film. In fact it seems that most of *Meteor* consists of lengthy shots of these awful missiles, first as they orbit the Earth on their Meccano set space stations and then as they make the interminable flight towards the meteor. Yet they are just not technically competent enough to stand up to such lengthy exposure. (Another of the film's many flaws in logic involves the former sequences — there are several shots of the ground crew watching close-ups of the missile stations on television monitors yet there is never any indication of *where* these tv pictures are coming from).

The physical effects, on the other hand, are adequate and are presumably the work of Glen Robinson and Robert Staples, the only two effects men who are mentioned in the credits. The major physical effects sequence in *Meteor* is the famous mud scene in which a million pounds of "artificial" mud was dumped on all the principal actors in order to simulate the flooding of a New York subway tunnel. It prompted Sean Connery to remark: "This is the most frightening set I've ever worked on." Connery suffered a lot during the making of the picture and actually had to be hospitalised at one point as a result of dust inhalation.

The cast is probably the best thing about *Meteor* — apart from Connery it includes Brian Keith, handicapped by speaking only Russian throughout the film, Natalie Wood, who doesn't have much to do except translate Keith's Russian into English, Karl Malden and Martin Landau. They all do as well as they can in the circumstances, though you get the impression that halfway through the production they all started asking themselves: "What's a high class actor like me doing in a movie like this?"

But *Meteor* isn't a total loss. In fact at times it made me think I was back in the 1950s and watching a movie made by George Pal, albeit on one of his bad days. The rest of the time, however, *Meteor* is more like something made by Irwin Allen on one of his bad days, and you can't get much worse than that.

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LAND OF THE GIANTS

IRWIN ALLEN, THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH SCIENCE FANTASY TELEVISION SHOWS AS *LOST IN SPACE* AND *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA* PRODUCED A SHORTER-RUNNING, BUT TECHNICALLY MORE IMPRESSIVE, SERIES *LAND OF THE GIANTS*.



Left: Dan Erickson (Don Marshall) crouches atop a thermos flask in a scene from *Land of the Giants*.



Just over ten years ago, producer Irwin Allen launched his last big science fiction series on American television: *The Land of the Giants*. It was so big and so successful that almost an entire generation of sf buffs have grown up having never seen it and knowing little about it!

When *Land of the Giants* first went on the air, creator Irwin Allen confidently remarked, "In making this series I have worked out a whole new concept for filming 'magic'. It is a technical process which allows us to show our travellers and the giants together in a single 'unmarked' film frame. And the Earthlings with giant insects and animals. We have had to think *big* all the way. And my answer to questions about this series and other work I have created and produced for tv and films is very simply: I love science fiction."

Those of you who are familiar with Mr Allen's track record in the sf feature film and tv series department are permitted to laugh loudly at the latter part of this statement.

To familiarise readers with the overall concept of the show, I will let Mr Allen himself clue you in. "To begin with, *Land of the Giants* is exactly what the title states: it is a land inhabited by giants, people twelve times the size of the seven Earth people who land in their midst. The new arrivals are passengers aboard a rocketship in suborbital flight in the year 1983 when they pass through a space-time warp and are thrust onto this strange planet. Their puzzlement soon turns to horror when a mere boy on this new world picks up their craft. To him it's a toy! The boy is the humans' first contact with this unknown world's giant inhabitants. A burst of rocket power tears the 'toy' from the boy's hands. A brief, wild flight ensues and the terrified travellers land in a forest."

The show then went on to introduce new jeopardies — usually in the form of malevolent giant people — from this particular base every week.

Despite the tendency toward woodenness, the series' regulars — Gary Conway, Kurt Kaszner, Don Marshall, Don Matheson, Deanne Lund and Stefan Arngren — managed to stand up pretty well against the show's main

Opposite below: Val Scott (Deanne Lund) is examined by a giant entomologist (Don Waters) in the episode, *The Clash*. Below: Gary Conway makes a phone call in *Land of the Giants*. Inset: Don Matheson, and Gary Conway try to free Deanne Lund from an animal cage.



feature: the special effects. As *Hollywood Reporter's* reviewer saw it: "Gary Conway, trimmed down to an animator's economy of line and expression as the spaceship captain, has the credibility required to lead his refugees and viewers through Walter M. Scott and Norman Rockwell's dressing of Jack Martin Smith's fantastically magnified props and settings and the special photographic effects of L.B. Abbott, Art Cruickshank and Emil Kosa Jr, believing every dangerous step of the way."

The first episode, *Crash*, was directed by Allen himself (from a teleplay by Anthony Wilson); Nathan Juran, big screen director of such features as *First Men in the Moon*, directed a couple of segments, Hermon Jones handled one (*A Place Called Earth*) and Harry Harris and Sobe Martin handled all the others. Directors Harris and Martin go back to Allen's earlier small screen adventures, with *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Lost in Space* and *The Time Tunnel*.

Land of the Giants soon

became a victim of tired and dull plots, with our heroes having to reveal themselves to the giants, for various silly reasons, and face all the obvious dangers.

"How the Earthlings cope with these immense and formidable people provides a series of exciting adventures," stated Mr Allen. "As they strive to stay alive under circumstances of unparalleled peril, they also work with all their wits, courage and strength to get back home."

But, to prove that *Land of the Giants* was "true" sf, Allen added that, "The civilisation they find in the *Land of the Giants* is like that they knew back home on Earth. There are good giants and bad ones; intelligent, greedy and dumb giants. They use appropriately huge books, telephones, paper clips, cameras, shoes, spoons of thread, pencils . . . and they speak English. Yes, it would seem that English is the universal language. Anyone who has seen *Planet of the Apes* or read *Gulliver's Travels* knows apes and horses found elsewhere in the

universe speak English. And now even interplanetary giants."

Apart from all this nonsense from Irwin Allen, *Land of the Giants* does remain one of tv's significant excursions into special effects. DeLuxe colour photography by Howard Schwartz used distortion lenses to help make the "giant" actors appear even more monstrous. Not really surprising that each *Land of the Giants* episode was budgeted over 250,000 dollars — end, to a great extent, it showed.

During its 51 episode run, 1968 to 1970, the show ran in weekly competition with such contemporary fantasy series as *The Avengers*, *Journey to the Unknown*, *The Wild, Wild West*, *Star Trek* and *The Immortal*. However, next to Allen's *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Land of the Giants* remains his most visually spectacular small screen series.

In a way, Allen's juvenile-orientated science fantasy series of the 1960s paved the way for him to later assault the big screens with such offerings as *The Poseidon Adventure*, *The Swarming Inferno*, *Fire and Swarm*.

During production of *Land of the Giants* Allen attempted another fantasy series with *The Men from the Twenty-Fifth Century* but the pilot show failed to launch a series; 1971 saw another Allen-inspired pilot by way of *City Beneath the Sea* (aka *One Hour to Doomsday*) which also failed to sell; one of his last pilots was *The Time Travellers* in 1976 and, although it was one of the last scripts written by the eminent Rod Serling, this too failed to score as a series.

Although *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* remains as Allen's first commercial tv success, *Lost in Space* his most famous (or infamous) series and *The Time Tunnel* his least successful series, *Land of the Giants* stands on its own as a minor triumph of tv visual effects — possibly the worst show to emerge from the 1960s Irwin Allen stable of sf adventure.

With ITV having re-run *The Time Tunnel* just a few years ago, another chance to look at *Land of the Giants* would be in order — especially now that small screen science fantasy is at its lowest ebb for years.

As I was saying last issue, Sandy Howard had the best poster in Cannes '79: *Death Ship*. And the worst headache: Meteor. He also has a continuing line-up of finely-engineered fantasy films on a large enough scale to elevate him alongside Schneer, Dark, Allen and Kurtz as a thoroughly dependable science fantasy producer.

Apart from the odd quote in *Things to Come*, we don't talk that often with producers in Starburst. We lean more towards directors. Sandy Howard, however, has much to say about movies today, the setting up and marketing of them, about producers, and yes, he has some of the usual complaints about directors. As he makes films for us, we

thought it time he had a platform to speak to us via Starburst.

Sandy Howard is a promoter as well as a producer. He promotes his films more than himself, though. He's worked in television, amusement parks and other leisure-oriented activities. He's made more than fifty tv series in America and about 25 films or more shot in 18 countries. He reckons he's travelled about two-million miles in the last decade: shooting, buying and selling. He looks good on it. "For a man of 86, you mean," he roars. Actually, he is a handsome fellow, and could fill a leading role in any of his projects. If Henry Fonda couldn't have played the US President in *Meteor*, Sandy Howard would have been

a perfect incumbent of the Oval Office.

"I'd like to stop" he says of his hectic work pace. "I don't because I have *St Vitus' Dance*. I run because I'm learning so much. From every film, every country, every distributor. It's prepared me for whatever time I have left in this industry. Of course, I hope to grow and learn more. The major companies have the film industry by the short ones. We independents have to think very international — more long-ranged planning. Each new motion picture must be a special event — no matter how small the film.

"Look around this office we're in, look at each of these blow-up photographs of the posters or ads for our new product — and you'll see something that

SANDY HOWARD



Left: The excellent ad art for the Sandy Howard movie *Death Ship* which is being shot on location in the Gulf of Mexico even as we write this. Opposite below: Two scenes from the same film — George Kennedy as one of the survivors of a shipwreck and as he appears later in the film, looking sinister in a Nazi Uniform. Opposite above: The ad art for another Sandy Howard offering, *City on Fire*.

screen hero.
for

can be sold. Something different and unique. Anybody who thinks a good movie will sell is crazy. Not good movies. Good *themes!*"

I looked around (as if one could miss the array of excellent art on his Cannes hotel walls). His future looks as good as himself.

His past films include *A Man Called Horse* and its sequel, plus *Island of Dr. Moreau*, *Sky Riders*, *The Neptune Factor* and *David Carradine's Silent Flute*. Not world-beaters, but not bad. Now his walls are alive with the art of several films to intrigues Starbursters everywhere, topped by *Meteor*. As usual, they're great themes, carefully researched throughout the various international territories. (He

polled them himself and discovered odd requirements. Australia, alone, wanted musicals and only Japan, "the market which loves to cry the most," wanted love stories). His projects are then shot with carefully honed budgets, plus a style and panache he picked up from being around such legendary showmen as Billy Rose and Mike Todd.

"I haven't really come through yet. I've had a couple of big ones like *A Man Called Horse* which was a success but not a breakout hit, not the kind of thing where you say, *Oh God, isn't it wonderful - retirement money*. Now I can really go out and have some fun.

He's working on it. *Meteor*, despite - or indeed because of - the delay over the

special-effects, would do him some good. And he has special hopes for an upcoming project called *Brainstorm*. Being an independent producer, however, is a recognised struggle. Howard reckons he won't see his own money from *Meteor* for another four or five years. "So, at my age, I've only got another five pictures left in me. The problem being that the last one for the money to filter down to is the producer. This is the biggest schmuck in the industry. He works the longest and the hardest and he really doesn't get his just rewards for a successful film. You have to have *Star Wars*, if you want to make a dollar."

The second part of the interview, begun last issue, now follows.

ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN FIGURES IN THE WORLD OF CINEMA, SANDY HOWARD HAS A STRING OF FILMS TO HIS CREDIT INCLUDING A MAN CALLED HORSE, ISLAND OF DR MOREAU AND THE SILENT FLUTE. AND EVEN NOW HE IS PLANNING A ONE MAN CINEMATIC BLITZKREIG. TONY CRAWLEY TALKED TO SANDY HOWARD AT CANNES

With all these problems, whatever induced you to become a producer?

I wasn't the best director in the world, but I was fastest. I wasn't the best writer in the world, but I knew construction rather well. Somebody with the knowledge of both, that makes a better producer than either director or writer. I'm really not a master of any particular thing, but I'm very good at a lot of things. I enjoy the activity. I enjoy climbing not one mountain at a time, but several. Producing is my golf, my tennis. *Or mountain climbing!*

Right! We've got a lot of mountains up there on the wall. They're all a climb. Every one is its own individual obstacle course. I don't enjoy the obstacles so much, but you have to accept the fact that every picture has its problems... because we often make pictures that are very, very difficult.

Such as...

City On Fire was very difficult. We weren't making it for 15-million dollars, we made it for 5-million dollars, and yet



it required an enormous amount of special effects - visual and sound. That's a great personal challenge. As we couldn't afford so many optical effects, we burned down a city. We thought it would be easier!

How do you find a spare city to burn up, look in Yellow Pages?

Yes! We found a couple of places in Montreal, Canada, and a few places in Alabama. So we burned down square blocks. We were invited to. Despite all the ecology problems in the world, it's amazing how many cities will invite you there to bring smoke into the air.

RSVP and bring your own oxygen masks...

They were wrecking the places anyway and they want some business there, and

some notoriety. So in we went and literally burnt them down. Let me tell you it's a lot cheaper than opticals. An oil refinery goes up, a police station, a hospital - the whole city gets levelled. We have knockout sound effects from the brilliant Ken Heeley-Ray, too.

City On Fire has almost an Irwin Allen cast: Shelley Winters, Ava Gardner, Henry Fonda again, James Franciscus, plus of course Barry Newman and Susan Clark. Safe names. Jaguar Lives sounds more fun, most of the 007 team Chris Lee, Donald Pleasence, Barbara Bach, Joseph Wiseman - plus a star in the making - you hope!

Very exciting to me because we're introducing a new, young talent, the next Clint Eastwood or the next Errol Flynn: Joe Lewis. So, another personal challenge. Are we right or are we wrong? An agent introduced me to him. Joe is one of the greatest athletes of the world, as handsome a kid as there is, probably, on the face of this planet, but ruggedly so. He thinks of himself as being a star.



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TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

He has every bit of the charisma that makes a star work, all the talent and magnetic personality. I think he's going to knock the world right on its tail. *You're ever hopeful.*

The independent producer lives in a world of hope.

But you don't like stars. You've often said movie budgets are getting out of control due to drunken actors.

That's the safest controversy in the history of the world. If they're drunk on the job, actors or directors, as far as I'm concerned, you don't take them as a psychiatrist — you give 'em a good

"If actors or directors are drunk on the job they should be thrown out of the business."

kicking. These bums should be thrown out of business. It's just that simple.

So tell me about —

(He interrupts) *Power Barons* is a Hitchcock-type film about a tv newsman discovering a secret cartel controlling world sales of 25-billion dollars in weapons, a cartel that can hold the world to ransom anytime. The *Gold Train* is a very, very big film which Michael Luke has scripted from Peter Fleming's book, *The Fate of Admiral Kolchak*. It has the size of a *Dr Zhivago* or a *Lawrence of Arabia*, an epic adventure, love story, and absolutely sensational yarn, which happens to be true. John Guillerman is interested in making it for us.

Fine, fine. I'm more intrigued by two other films, Brainstorm, I take it, is the reason poor Doug Trumbull can't call his next feature, Brainstorm.

I think that is so, yes.



Well, you should know!

Our *Brainstorm* is the first science fiction murder story. A light and sound show. I think it will be in the genre of *Close Encounters*, but a totally different, very unique story. One to dazzle the eye and dazzle the ear.

About what?

A new way to die. It's terrifying! The killer is unlike anything that has yet been conceived. Michael Berk and Douglas Schwartz have written the script. *[He reads his publicity]*. Key people at GENESIS, the ultimate computer project, are being murdered in bizarre ways. Unworldly. Someone had better find out

who — or what — the murderer is. And fast. Strange things are appearing in the night sky. Horrifying images manifest themselves in the computer's mind. Something has to be done before GENESIS becomes fully operational and explodes to life in colours and sounds and lights that will create a new reality on Earth... a reality that the human mind cannot comprehend.

Eat your heart out, Doug Trumbull. What about Odysea? Sounds good...

Here we have a *Gone With The Wind* underwater in the year 2080.

"We've made an offer to John Boorman to direct one of our movies, Odysea."

How do you burn down Atlanta underwater...?

Hah! We've made an offer to John Boorman to direct, we think John would be very good for this film. *[Except he's now finally got the go-ahead on his life's ambition: his Merlin movie]*. John Lind, who scripted *Power Barons*, has written this one, an epic underwater adventure in the year 2080 when the world's surface has been ravaged by war, pollution and



Below: The survivors of the ship wreck in the movie *Death Ship*.

greed and the oceans are the final refuge of small bands of men and women believing in freedom and the value of human life. The warlords of a dying Earth go to war with the underwater pioneers, and a new hero emerges — a futuristic Greek goddess.

Who's she?

The first casting we will do will be with the people doing the optical effects. Bill Cruse, who did such a great job on the *Meteor* opticals, will probably be working with us again on *Odysea*.

*So you've learned from your *Meteor* mistakes in the *Special Effects* area?*

I always said *Meteor* was a learning process. *Odysea* is a different set of mathematics. When you're dealing with underwater events, what comes out of it is any-

one spent on relatively few films, I fear that 1969 will happen all over again. There was a wonderful line attributed to Robert Wise — "The worst thing that ever happened to the industry was *The Sound of Music*!" Well, the worst thing that could have happened lately was the extraordinary success of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*. Hollywood now equates quality and size and success with money. And that's nonsense. With the high cost of marketing and shooting, there isn't a chance that all of these multi-million-dollar pictures are going to get their money back. Not a chance. It's going to be a very difficult situation over the next few years for the companies who think they have the secret to the formula. There is no secret to the formula.

Is the day of the producer coming back, then?

I think so. Somebody has to control the insanity of the business. There was a time — no personal affront — if you were young, wore a beard and scratched in public, a lot of the so-called executives thought you were a special kind of director. A lot of the directors used for a long period of time were the biggest fakes that ever lived.

Do you have the final say on the cut of your projects, as producer?

Yes, yes. Except if we're working with a major studio, otherwise I do have absolute control. Hopefully, I don't have to interfere with the creative artists. Hopefully, my director cuts it very well. Unfortunately, not that many do cut that well. They're so in love with moments they can't look at the entirety with objectivity and see that those moments of eight minutes should be three or two or maybe five. Many directors come out of tv, where they don't even cut their own shows. Once into films, they think they know what they're doing and honestly do not. Of course, there are some who are simply marvellous. But too many

directors get the job by some kind of magic, and their cinematographer saves the show for them. Or in the case of a picture that won all the awards a couple of years ago, an actor had actually directed a great deal of the film and made it work, instead of the director who won copious awards. At the same time, God knows how many directors have saved a film from the producer. There's so many intangibles that makes bums a hit, or bums a hero or a hero a bum. Nowhere in the world, except in this business, is there such a convoluted sense of priority of importance of certain people.

*Didn't you direct a *Tarzan* movie once?*

That's why I know what I'm talking about. That was, without question, the worst movie ever made in the history of

"Odysea has got to be the most visually exciting underwater film ever."

body's guess. Again, we're trying to be innovative, creating the underwater world of a hundred years from now — let's say, a couple of hundred years from now. *Odysea* has got to be the most visually exciting underwater film ever for it to work. Therefore, we'll be doing miniature work far beyond the norm. Cities underwater, events and action underwater that has never even been thought of before. This time we're making sure we're pre-planning for as long as necessary, before actually going into production. It will save time. And money.

You've been underwater before, though.

Yes, we did *The Neptune Factor* with Fox, also in partnership with a company I've made a lot of films with recently, Astral Bellevue-Pathé, in Canada. We're doing five pictures this year in Canada — more than for the tax thing. It works for us there. Canada is less expensive to shoot in than Los Angeles. Canada and America basically look the same, with the exception of flags and car licence plates.

And you always keep an eye on the money angle. Fantastical stories do not necessarily mean fantastical budgets.

I know one thing. If it costs 15-million dollars to produce a motion picture, it's a lot harder to get your money back than if you made a good movie for 8-million dollars... what with the extraordinary interest rates, then advertising and marketing. It doesn't make any sense. We'll have to go back to specialised films again in my opinion.

Is that possible any more in today's kind of movie business where the budget is the star?

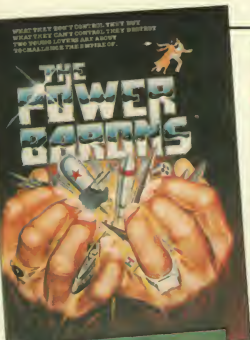
Sure, why not? I think it's fun. There's more personalisation in a small movie. And more will be made regardless of what they're doing now. Such huge amounts

"Tarzan and the Trappers was the worst film ever made in the history of the world."

the world. *Tarzan* and the *Trappers*, think! I directed it in three days. Gordon Scott's contract had run out on the Friday. He'd made a bad tv pilot — with snakes in it. Dumb! There you are sitting at home eating spaghetti and see snakes on your tv... To save it, we decided on that Friday to shoot a new one by the following Friday. We wrote the script over the weekend, incorporating *Tarzan* into an old Russian fable, we used the sets of a Victor Mature film called *Timbuktu*. We finished the script on Tuesday. Cast it Tuesday night, and shot Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. The first film I'd ever directed. I'd been an active tv director so I used three cameras and we shot a 100-minute film in three days, well 55 minutes plus 20 minutes of the damned tv pilot and eight minutes of stock footage. Anytime it played a

Below: Sean Connery as he appears in *Meteor*. Opposite above: A selection of ad art from three Sandy Howard projects.





cinema, it would either turn to a garage next day or melt the projector it was so bad. The worst film ever made. And it made a fortune!

How do you work today?

We care. Every film we make, we put everything into it we know how. Not all have been successful, fortunately few have lost a great deal of money. I promise you we do everything within our capacity, creative and financial, to make sure every picture lives. I wish we were smarter, but every one of our films are very professional. It's more a question of whether the story has a theme that will interest and excite the public. We believe in everything we make. But we're gambling. We'll go out and do a lot of things other people won't do. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. When it works, we're very bright. When it doesn't, we're dummies.

SATURN 3

TONY CRAWLEY LOOKS AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A NEW BRITISH-MADE SCIENCE FICTION EPIC.



Above: Hervey Keitel (in the dark space suit) arrives on Saturn 3. Below: Farrah in danger.

Below: Kirk Douglas in action as Farrah



Well, no wonder Lucky Lady was such a flop five years ago . . . While Burt Reynolds, Liza Minnelli and Gene Hackman were wrestling with a lamentable script (and each other) on location in Mexico in 1975, the real cinematic excitements were being discussed on the set between takes or over tequilla sunrises in the hotels and haciendas at night.

Gary Kurtz flew down from Los Angeles to talk John Barry into being the production designer of something Gary's old University of Southern California classmate, George Lucas, had dreamed up. A little movie to be called *Star Wars*. And when Gary was gone, John was chatting to his Lucky Lady director, Stanley Donen, about a creepy science fiction yarn he was knocking into outline shape. A little item called *Saturn 3*.

Burt, Liza and Gene didn't stand a chance . . .

Both of the other ventures, like *Topsy*, grew into multi-million-dollar properties. *Star Wars*, we all know about. I think *Saturn 3*, which won't take half as much money or make as many influential film waves (or it won't now that, alas, the late John Barry never did get to direct it), is more of an *Alien*. Or at least closer to publicity man Brian Doyle's original capsule description of the Ridley Scott venture: 2001 directed by Hitchcock. Because Hitch would never resort to suspense about some creep-crawly (no relation) animalish monster on the loose. No, he'd be far more taken, I feel, with John Barry's notion of a Kubrickian robot gone wrong . . . very wrong indeed.

Such is the fate befalling scientists and lovers Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett in space. This galactic Adam and Eve (actually, she's called Alex) work and play in a subterranean research station called Titan on *Saturn 3*, one of the moons in orbit around Saturn, some 793,660,000 miles from earth and about oh, anywhere between 200 and 300

and Keitel cower in the background.



Above left: Hector looms over the prostrate form of Keitel. Above right: Meet Hector, the robot.



Above: Douglas and Fawcett exercise. Below: Keitel's ship touches down on Saturn 3.



years from now.

The only other human being in the film is their visitor, Hervey Keitel, the friendly, neighbourhood repair man for their rogue robot, Hector. Not so friendly as it turns out. He's supposed to be helping them with their problem of Hector. Instead of which, Keitel makes a grandstand play for Alex and adds much of his own "potentially unstable" personality to Hector's.

To make matters worse, Keitel's arrival (soon after killing off the skipper of his spacecraft) coincides with the 22-day communications blackout period when Saturn 3 goes into eclipse... and Hector goes on the blink, HAL-style. Only more so with any one that gets in its way.

"It's probably closer to the real Frankenstein story than a Hitchcock thriller," says producer-director Stanley Donen. He started off as producer of the project, taking over the directorial reins when the powers-that-be, Lew Grade included, felt that John Barry could not direct his own story; Barry later died while working with Gary Kurtz and Co on *The Empire Strikes Back*.

"I can't really think of a Hitchcock movie that is too much like this," Donen continues. "It's meant to frighten you in an unusual way and give you a sense of relief at the way that it comes out."

"It's science fiction but not comic-strip. Not that I denigrate comic-strips. One of my favourite movies is *Star Wars*. But our picture is a terrifying experience for the audience and, therefore, not a funny one." He pauses and then adds, "It's also a film that is both sensuous and sensual."

Well, I wouldn't be too sure about that, Stan. It all depends on how you rate Farrah Fawcett on a scale of one to zero. Or, how much you might look upon 64 year-old Kirk Douglas messing around with the 34 year-old Farrah, who is old enough to be his mother-in-law... and looks lit.

Okay — I've nailed my colours to the mast. Farrah Whosis is not my favourite screen female. I'll try not to let her lack of presence influence my remarks any further, although it has to be said that such oddball casting does tend to put off potential ticket-buyers, even the most dedicated sf fans. Farrah, after all, has not yet made any dent whatsoever in the box-office trade with her other two "movies" and if this one proves to be the exception to her rule, it most certainly will not be due to her.

The true star of this three-hander in space is the rogue robot, Hector, whose place in the Hall of Robotic Fame is assured. Hector is an eight foot tall automaton of Herculean proportions — an all-round bad egg. He's also pretty handy with the laser.

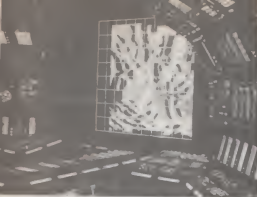
Part of Hector's basic flaw would appear to be its built-in Lew Grade com-

Below: Hector, my mad robot, towers over the fallen Keitel. Top right: The interior of the Titan base. Centre right: An enraged Douglas attempts homicide with Keitel as an unwilling participant. Below right: Farrah Fawcett as the lovely Alex.



Below: Kirk Douglas prepares to face the eight foot tall robot in a fight to the finish. Far right: Hervey Keitel plays the potentially unstable maintenance engineer who arrives on Saturn 3 to overhaul the robot Hector.





plex. He has developed a mistakenly high appreciation of Farrah, as well as the film's backer. This is a mortal fault. The robot actually fancies Farrah, though it has an odd way of showing it — holding her inches off the ground by her bleeding wrists, for example.

Other than this quirk in his make-up, Hector is a wonderfully metallic beast, concocted by Stuart Craig (John Barry's assistant on *Superman*, making his production design debut with this film). Craig says he went back to Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical sketches for his initial design, and you can't dig up a richer influence than that.

Putting Craig's concept into walking, stalking practise was another of the *Superman* team, Oscar-winning special effects supervisor Colin Chilvers. As well as Hector — "first of the Demi-God series" — Colin was responsible for the Titan base's two other robots, lab assistants Rivet and Morfax, plus the spacecraft and the moonbuggy.

"Hector," says Chilvers, "was quite an awesome devil to work with as well. You could fill an issue of *Starburst* with the problems of getting it to work... (We will later, with an interview feature with Colin on his *Saturn 3* and *Superman II* work).

Once John Barry had completed his story, Stanley Donen suggested Martin Amis as screenwriter. The novelist son of a novelist father (Kingsley Amis), Martin's first book, *The Rachel Papers*, was followed by a fantasy novel set in a decadent future, *Dead Babies*. Barry accepted the Amis notion. So did Lord Lew Grade when Donen presented the package to him at the Beverly Hills Hotel during the shooting of their *Movie, Movie* film in 1978.

And who should Lord Lew be sitting next to on the plane back to London, but Farrah Fawcett Majors as she still called herself then. She read the outline on the flight and by the time they touched down at Heathrow, she had signed up for her first space trip. Lord Lew, it appears, carries contracts in his pockets, as well as cigars. No solutions, however, to the tax problems of top British stars, which is why he could never persuade his first choice of Sean Connery and Michael Caine to join her on Titan as Adam and the murderous Captain James.

The story then goes that Kirk Douglas cancelled plans for a lengthy vacation because he wanted to make a movie, apparently any movie, with Farrah Fawcett. If that is true, then the moon is made of Roquefort, no matter what Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, Alan Shepard and others reported. Certainly, Kirk has always helped develop new screen talent. But only when the people in question had any talent to offer: Stanley Kubrick, Walter Matthau, George C. Scott, Elsa Martinelli, and of course, his acting-

producing sons, Michael, Joel and Peter.

Having starred in some 59 films in 34 years, Kirk could retire anyway he feels like it. Instead he makes a commendable fetish of avoiding the obvious in scripts and ferretting out roles to excite and challenge him. "I've turned down so many movies in the last few years because they just didn't interest me," he explains. "So when I'm offered something like *Saturn 3* which is like nothing I've done before, I'm intrigued. The idea behind it is so fresh, so different to anything else I've been offered in the realm of science fiction that I didn't want to miss out on it.



It is the veteran star's first sf outing since Disney met Jules Verne *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* (1954), and Kirk must have enjoyed the feel. He's since made another Don (Omen II) Taylor's time-warp offering, *The Final Countdown* (*Starburst* 17), to celebrate his 60th film in a project produced by his ex-photographer son, Peter.

Much the same goes for Hervey Keitel, the hot young star of *Marty Scorsese* films like *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* and *Taxi Driver*. And still hot even if he was dropped by Coppola from *Apocalypse Now*. Having begun his inevitable Euro-movie career with Kirk and Co, Keitel went straight into Bertrand Tavernier's French sf film, *Death Watch*, in Scotland. He's also in *Bad Timing*, the next movie from Nic Roeg, director of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

I do gather, however, that Keitel was rather less enthused with the entire project than anyone else on the *Saturn* strength. He was not, as they say, happy. And refused to do his own post-synching, and so most of his role is dubbed by... Roy Dotrice.

At first, *Saturn 3*, was going to be lensed on location among the volcanic setting of Lanzarote in the Canary Isles. However, a quick reconnaissance trip ruled out this possibility (for the exteriors alone) and so Stuart Craig went back to his drawing-board and let his imagination run riot for a remarkable debut as production designer. He dreamt up the mammoth Titan at the very edge of man-

inhabited space . . . inside the Shepperton Film Centre in Hertfordshire, to be precise.

By the time he'd finished, Craig had taken over the entire studio . . . He filled both the huge A and B sound-stages with Titan alone. He opened up the enormous doors dividing the two stages and let his Titan (ic) base run a length of 280ft between them, stretching, wall-to-wall, across the 120ft wide stages. The few visitors actually allowed in said it looked like a beached whale . . . supported by thousands of feet of tubular scaffolding.

Craig occupied C Stage as well, with the interior of a passenger spaceship, complete with promenade deck and the inevitable exterior panorama of silvery stars. The rest of the area on this stage was utilised for the central concourse, launch hanger and locker room of the orbiting space platform.

Meanwhile, back on his Siamese-twinned A and B Stages, a problem developed. Stanley Donen's cast and crew

porous red-black lava rock of the planet.

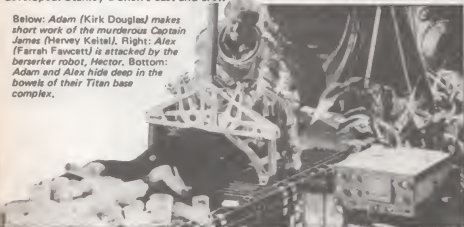
Sounds simple. But this layout meant construction manager Ken Pattenden (the man who built Big Ben in the recent remake of *The 39 Steps*) had 79 workers constructing Titan for ten weeks before shooting began. They got through 13 tons of resin, 3½ tons of glassfibre and 60,000ft of scaffolding.

Another six weeks were spent on sculpting the lava tunnels and caves from polystyrene blocks. Lit from below, the better to cast off spooky shadows, the metal grid floors of these corridors were constructed from the kind of pallets used with fork-lift trucks. So if you happen to need a few, call Ken Pattenden. He has 200 lifting-pallets on his hands right now . . .

Curving, straight, sloping or level, the sinister corridors — black walls, grey floors and blue lighting above and below — have a head clearance of about 7ft 6ins. Just about enough room for Hector . . .

If Hector proves, as expected, the

Below: Adam (Kirk Douglas) makes short work of the murderous Captain James (Hervey Keitel). Right: Alex (Farrah Fawcett) is attacked by the berserker robot, Hector. Bottom: Adam and Alex hide deep in the bowels of their Titan base complex.



kept getting lost. They needed copies of the draughtsman's plans before they could find their way around the masses of corridors linking Titan's laboratory, communications room, decontamination chamber, moonbuggy garage, living, sleeping and guest quarters. Minus any maps, the crew found an easier way to deal with the muddlesome set. They christened the two main nuclei Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus for easier identification . . .

"The whole surface of Saturn 3 is supposed to be radioactive and poisonous," says Stuart Craig, "so if you show it as volcanic and really volatile, it serves to show the threat outside. The interiors, by contrast, give the impression of almost cocoon-like safety."

Production designers have an imagination to equal that of any sf writer (which is how John Barry came up with his story to start with), and Stuart Craig is no exception. Reasoning that scant real construction work would ever be carried out on planets, even with advanced technology of the future, he had the station's various sections made in modular form. He then left the eerily lit corridors as the





main attraction of *Saturn 3*, then Stuart Craig is the top star behind the scenes. Having graduated from the Royal College of Art, the Norwich-born Craig started in movies as a junior draughtsman for designer Michael Stringer on the ill-fated *Casino Royale* farce in 1967. He worked his way up, in harness with Terry Marsh on such films as *Scrooge* and *A Touch of Class*, until graduating to art director with *A Bridge Too Far* and Dick Lester's *Butch and Sundance: The Early Days*. Then, Craig joined forces with John Barry on *Superman*.

Craig's touches are everywhere on his vast sets. He thinks future space stations would, quite naturally, be furnished by

rather grey governmental departments — airline style, bolted-to-the-floor stuff. Colour, therefore, had to be supplied by the more personal possessions of Adam and Alex: Charles Eames chairs, a model yacht and Penguin books in acrylic covers.

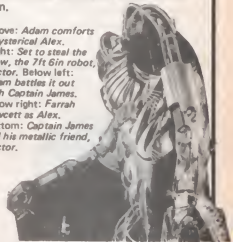
In the lab, Craig's set dresser, Alan Cassie, covered the plexiglass-topped tubular steel benches with all the usual test tubes and sample jars in the rock sample assembly area. Obviously, most of the lab's electronic equipment (worker-robots included) is highly futuristic. But all kitchen utensils are very familiar. "Anything you drink from," explains Cassie, "has to follow the con-

tory — a green-fingered dream replete with oscilloscopes, electrically controlled nutrient chambers, and more sample jars for cloned plants.

In fact, one of Adam and Alex's most prized possessions is a colour transparency of an oak tree in full leaf, as they appeared on Earth once upon a time. Not that Farrah knows too much about that, her Alex was born in space and has never visited the mother planet.

Real-life space man, Gordon Cooper, would love the costumes. No buttons. Anthony Mendleson designed the clothes and deliberately avoided any Dr Who or Superman rip-offs. He supplied nylon velour jumpsuits, sleeveless and quilted over-jackets and slacks in washable suede (it's called Alcanatra, suede freaks) to literally suit Kirk and Farrah's often hefty work schedule aboard the space station. For play, tee-shirts galore... Kirk found the clothes too comfortable, he took his wardrobe back home with him.

Above: Adam comforts a hysterical Alex. Right: Set to steal the show, the 7ft 6in robot, Hector. Below left: Adam battles it out with Captain James. Below right: Farrah Fawcett as Alex. Bottom: Captain James and his metallic friend, Hector.



But any space movie must have space-suits. Keitel arrives in one, and the Adam and Alex team need them for their work on the planet's surface. "I wanted to get away from the traditional suits which we're all a bit bored with by now," says Mendleson. "I went for contrast... Kirk and Farrah wear stiff, silver suits. Harvey's is more form-fitting, green vinyl with a cloth back. It's remarkably supple and stretches as he moves, springing back into shape without any bellie or sagging at elbow and knees. His clothes are all darker as he's a menacing character. Everything about him is strictly utilitarian."

There is, in fact, one thing only that Keitel has in common with the scientists: the multi-coloured tattooed scanmark they all have on the right side of their face. The identi-print of their day.

Keitel comes with a bizarre extra. Concealed under his strange hair style is an electronic probe, with which he can charge the robot Hector, transferring aspects of his own personality into the automaton.

No wonder Hector proves "potentially unstable", too.



tour of the mouth. So there's little point in designing square glasses or mugs." Good thinking, set-man!

There is also a touch of Doug Trumbull's *Silent Running* in the lab work. The thriller takes place at a time when man has finally, totally polluted Earth. The view of our planet from the spaceship depicts John Barry's alarming thoughts of Earth in the next millenium. And Farrah's main chore is tending 600 plants in her hydroponic section of the labora-



THINGS TO COME

The latest news and happenings in the worlds of cinema and television science fantasy
compiled by Tony Crawley.

THE LUCASBURGER!

Move over McDonalds, end Cept. Kirk too. The Lucasburger is coming... The little film that George Lucas and Steven Spielberg decided to make together many moons ago is growing by the minute. Shooting begins on *Reiders of the Last Ark* on May 15th at George's happy hunting-ground of Elstree studios — and already, before a single shot is completed, they have four sequels in the planning stages! If, of course, the first Ark errs the way that everyone, including Paramount who are putting up all the money, intends it to go.

Little is known of the highly secret venture, beyond it being yet another original storyline from George, a period all-action swash-buckler piece with, according to the Paramount top brass, "high style adventure... and great heroic characters". George's Lucasfilm president, Charles J. Weber, adds that *Last Ark* will be as different from *Star Wars* as that film was

have to give them the lot... end your first-born!

Well, don't you? Their hit films, after all, have by now earned more than one billion dollars between them. Or put it another way, that's one dollar for every inhabitant of Red China (no wonder Hollywood is trying to open up the Chinese market!). In response to which, all Michael Eisner says is, "This is an expensive deal for Paramount but one with which we are totally confident in realising a tremendous return on its investment." (I bet he said much the same about their *Star Trek* trash).

Actually no budget has been revealed as yet for the film that will use less of the second stages and the production time at Elstree than either *Star Wars* or *Empire* did. But I gather the price is around the 20-million dollar mark... much cheaper than *Star Trash*.

All of which leads me to an intriguing speculation: Who sacks who? The film belongs to Lucasfilm, which supplies Spielberg as director, Frank Marshall as producer, while George acts as executive producer. George and Steven have "final creative approval... within certain specified guidelines". And thereby hangs my query. As everyone knows Spielberg is notorious for going way over budget and schedule on his films. Lucas is not. And according to his front men, Weber, George "feels the responsibility to bring the production in on budget". If he pulls that off, with Spielberg at the helm, it'll be something of an impossible coup. So, if Steven looks like resorting to his normal practices where time and money are concerned, we may yet witness the staggering spectacle of George Lucas sacking Steven Spielberg... and, no doubt, finishing the movie himself.

You have been warned.

Columbia and Universal, the way *The Towering Inferno* combined the forces of 20th Century-Fox and Warner Brothers. Never Disney though, until now. They've talked about it, had negotiations but not until Popeye had they agreed — and on another Paramount project, *The Dragon Slayer*, in fact.

The pact means Paramount will release the films in the North American market, leaving Disney the rest of the world, where Disney's strength is supreme. The *Rescuers*, for example, is still Germany's all-time box-office champion movie. Disney president Cerd Walker, in London for *The Black Hole* world premiere, said he okayed the deal as both films featured elements synonymous with his company's reputation — "fantasy, escape, adventure and potential for innovative special effects". (See, not one word about animals with human characteristics).

The Dragon Slayer, which begins shooting at Shepperton in May, the same time as the Lucasburger takes off at Elstree, sounds very Disneyesque. It's about a sorcerer's apprentice yet! He slays a dragon in 6th Century Britain. The film is penned by producer Hal Berwood and director Matthew Robbins — the writers of Spielberg's *Sugarland Express*. No casting yet for the sorcerer's apprentice except that it won't be Mickey Mouse on this occasion; more like Eric Roberts, from *Dino De Laurentiis' mammoth flop, King of the Gypsies*, according to the rumours in Hollywood. Elliot Scott is production designer and all special effects will be tackled by a certain outfit in San Francisco owned by George's Lucasfilm. (Is there any film that George does not have a digit in just lately?)



from *American Graffiti*. (You'll notice he doesn't mention the *Graffiti* sequel, but then like the rest of us he's probably forgotten which of the various new titles it still answers to these days). The script of the new super-production is by Lerry Kesden, co-writer of *The Empire Strikes Back*, and George, Lerry and Steven Spielberg have already mapped out further adventures of their heroic characters, enough for the four other films — one of which George may direct himself... if, of course, he hasn't by then, kicked off another series of adventure films in harness with John Milius or Coppole himself.

The mighty Paramount studio has no doubt bent over backwards in order to win the privilege of paying for and releasing the Lucasburger. "You don't make standard deals with these kind of people," says Paramount's president, Michael D. Eisner. "People assume that to get Lucas and Spielberg together that you'd

DISNEY HISTORY

Paramount putting so much loot on the line for the Lucasburger is just one reason for the next surprise story out of Hollywood... After all those mighty budgets, needless box-office battles and non-stop critical comparison between *Star Trek* and *The Black Hole* comes the news that the two studios involved, Paramount and Disney, are combining resources to pay for Robert Altman's film of Popeye starring Robin (Mork) Williams. This is yet another 1980-style breakthrough for Disney — which has never co-produced a movie with another studio before in all its long history. Paramount have, of course, on Billy Friedkin's *The Sorcerer/Wages of Fear* among other films, and Spielberg's latest, 1941, is a co-production from



Robin Williams to play Popeye? Hardly inspired casting!

The Popeya venture started shooting in Malta in January, from a script by cartoonist Jules Feiffer. As mentioned before, this features Altman's find, Shelley Duvall as Olive Oyl — her first role since completing Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson and Scatmen Crothers. But surely Popeya can no longer be the kind of film that Robert Altman could have originally made of it? Must say, though, he seems happy enough with whatever restrictions the Para-Disney partnership has laid on him. (No R or X-rating, insists Disney). "As a film-maker," says Altman, "I'm thrilled with the idea of having access to the Disney audience, which I've always been trying to reach." Come again, Bob? You mean Nashville and M*A*S*H were aimed at Mouseketeers...?



DISNEY TROUBLE

And still more Disney history... For the first time in its lifespan, the Mickey Mouse studio will release one of its own productions — minus the Walt Disney company name and logo. The film is *Midnight Madness*, written, produced & directed, to the tune of 4.5 million dollars by the debut team of 23-year-olds Michael Nankin and David Wechter, who ren into all kinds of schedule and budgetary troubles during shooting. And now, says Disney production chief, Ron Miller, "it's a little off-colour for Disney." And so "to protect the value of the Disney name", it will be released by Disney's Buena Vista distribution arm in the States, but anonymously. "It has a few risqué things in it," explains Miller. But nobody is saying what. "Well, it's not 100% innocent," comments Michael Nankin. "It's not the sort of film you'd take your kids to and be totally sure that no one would be embarrassed". (That's funny, I'm always embarrassed when I take my daughter to a Disney film...). Seems to me, it's all a lot of fuss about nothing. *Midnight Madness* will finish up in America with PG rating, just like *The Black Hole* — which was about as adult as *Mary Poppins*. But with their growing pains, the Disney brass are running scared once they have a film that appeals to more of the 14-34 age range, than the babes in arms and neppies. It's about time Disney knew which side of the baby blanket it stood on.

DISNEY QUITTERS

Meanwhile, still more Disney animators have quit Uncle Walt's funny-ferm to join Don Bluth Productions on *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (see *Things* column in *Starburst* 16). Doris Lemper, a special effects animator on *The Black Hole*, and Jeffrey Patch, an assistant

animation director, are the latest to join ex-Disney men Bluth and eleven other former Disney animators. Disney has changed the figure of those left on the company strength: the studio now says it has an animation group of 60 artists, including a dozen character and two effects animators, plus nine trainees. Peter Ellenshaw, production designer of *The Black Hole*, said more or less good riddance to the quitters in London in December. "They thought they were smarter than Disney's old men and I was glad to see them go," he told a National Film Theatre audience. "Because anybody who doesn't feel they can work with a man like Frank Thomas is better off somewhere else. The genius of Frank Thomas is in the penguins dance in *Mary Poppins* and if anyone has done any better animation than that I haven't seen it." Maybe Don Bluth, with whom the quitters are obviously eternally loyal, will prove Ellenshaw wrong.

CONAN CONT'D

After Lucas, Spielberg — now for John Milius. His script for Conan has been around Hollywood so long now, they've had time to make two or three sequels. But, finally, the film looks like taking off under the Universal banner — and with Dino De Laurentiis now in charge. The project's original producer, Edward R. Pressman, is still connected with the plans. Milius will be shooting in Germany in the autumn with a budget going up to about 15-million dollars. Dino, who has yet to have any hit in the fantasy market, looks like making sure he has a Christmas treat to follow *Flash Gordon* in December, with *Conan* and, no doubt, *Dune* coming out by Christmas 1981. Though why he would want to compete with himself is anyone's guess.



SPACE PARK

Now why didn't Disney — or George Lucas — think of this . . . ? An enormously expensive movie of Robert Veszny's sf novel *Lord of Light*, is being mounted in Denver — with a budget in excess of 50-million dollars, the price of *Star Trek* and *The Black Hole* together. But even if the movie fails, the sets are due to be minting money for the next 99 years . . . After shooting, the sets will become part of a 415-million dollar Science Fiction Land Leisure and amusement park planned for over a thousand acres of land alongside Interstate 70, in Denver — that's more than triple the area of Disneyland. Shooting on the film, by Barry Ira Geller Productions, begins in July, and the park starts construction by the autumn with an opening pencilled in for that most distinctive of all science fiction dates . . . 1984.

MEGA-BUDGETS

While on the topic of enormous budgets, let's pause awhile for good words from the master, Orson Welles. "We are in a boom-or-bust world in which the big show is the only thing that does well," he proclaimed recently in Hollywood. "That's why it's so important to have a talent so immense that it can deliver not only a box-office smash, not only a great spectacle, not only a magnificent show — but the kind of movie that people are going to want to see and read about 50 years from now, or 100 years from now, if God should still give us this planet to show movies on — and make them."

Welles was speaking at the convention of the National Association of Theatre Owners, America's cinema exhibitors that is, and the only kind of N.A.T.O. that Hollywood is interested in. And it fell to Welles to present the Director of the Year award to none other than Lucas and Co's mentor, Francis Coppola for *Apocalypse Now*. "There are four kinds of movies," said the great Orson. "Good. Bad. Indifferent. And great. Once in a while the bad ones make money . . . Until recently it was a truism of eggheads . . . that every big budget picture could never be better produced. It's true that the biggest pictures, the most expensive and the most spectacular movies have almost invariably been just barely good." Was he talking about *Star Trek* . . . ?

As for Coppola, Welles commented, he "has managed not once, but three times to make one of those great big movies which can also be great!"

COPPOLOGY

So how does Coppola do it? By taking chances, following his head. "We must never allow motion picture cinema to be driven into little categories," said "Frenzy" at the same convention, "so that after a while, we can only make certain kinds of films because so-and-so

says so in a marketing analysis . . . When will we learn that the motion picture business or the motion picture is safe. Let's keep it alive. Let's not let it be marketing research." Well said!

SPIELBERGER SOLO

1941 is the current example of Spielberg going over budget — and schedule. His first comedy number — a case of *National Lampoon* meets *World War II* — should have opened in America on November 16, until a Dallas preview screening had his Columbia and Universal backers running scared . . . all the way back to the cutting-rooms. To give the director time to re-edit the 26.5 million dollars film's opening 45 minutes, the premiere was delayed a full month. And, in fact, Spielberg was calmly shooting again, a close-up of John Belushi uttering the comedy's last line, exactly five weeks before the new opening date! The restless Dallas crowd worried him not a jot. "It was a very good preview. I use a preview as much as I use a movie camera. It's a process of trial and error, to make the film work in the best way possible." Which meant jettisoning, repositioning and tightening the fidgety opening

stenze of the film. "The first 45 minutes," explains Spielberg, "basically set up the seven storylines that pay off in the last hour and 15 minutes. It's very expository, and there was some restlessness and lack of laughs . . . Other than that, the film is what it is." And even with 17 minutes trimmed out, and now lasting 118 minutes in all (including six minutes of final credits) that's not long according to US critics. Too short on comedy most of them said.

ENCOUNTERS 2

Spielberg, in fact, cannot leave his films alone. He's shooting new special effects sequences for *Close Encounters* at White Sands, New Mexico, in February 1980. He already directed some further new footage last year, and his uniquely re-tailored version will open in America for the summer. The title remains the same, and according to Columbia, the 800 prints of the original film will be destroyed to make way for the revised movie which then will be the only *Close Encounters* around — apart from the negative and a few prints in Columbia's vaults. But that's wrong, according to Spielberg. "There will be two versions of *Close Encounters* showing for

WHO READS EAGLE!



And so do an awful lot of other folk, from all countries. In fact, there are so many fans of the original *Eagle* comic that spawned *Den Dars* way back in the fifties that some of them have got together to stage the first *Eaglecon*. To be held on 12-13 April, 1980, the *Eaglecon* is cosponsored by the publishers, Oregon's Dream. Admission is £8 for the whole weekend and you can get your tickets and further details from 4 Grasmere Lodge, Bromley, Kent. And tell them we sent you.

the next 100 years, as far as I'm concerned," he says. And he's wrong, according to the studio distribution chief, Norman Levy — "there will never be a reason to re-release the first version." While they argue the toss about it, the basic facts are simple, and indeed rather short. The new version — "a luxurious experiment," Spielberg calls it — has five minutes junked and a mere seven minutes added. One wonders if it's really worth all the bother. *Close Encounters* has so far earned around 154-million dollars and damn few of us were dissatisfied with it...

THE MILIUSBERGER

John Milius and Steven Spielberg are continuing to back their young writer proteges of producer Robert Gale and director Robert Zemeckis. They are the writers of *1941*, directed by Spielberg and produced by Milius. The first time around, the quartet made Universal's biggest loser in three years, *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*. This time, they think they've got it right with *Used Cars*, a sleazy comedy about sleazy car salesmen on sleazy location in sleazy Arizona with Kurt Russell (John Carpenter's Elvis) and Jack Warden as two brothers. Columbia put up the money largely because, says Gale, the Columbia president Frank Price once sold cars himself for a couple of months in Beverly Hills. He quit over some of the foul methods involved — all of which get highlighted in the movie. The idea for the film came from executive producers Milius and Spielberg and the two writers researched the tricks of the trade in various used car lots and visited the used car capital of the west Lubbock, Texas, where also?



ROMERO & KING

That which Warner Brothers tv could not accomplish in America, The Laurel Group has. And that is a (double) teaming of director George Romero and writer Stephen King. A year or so ago, the tele-tycoons wanted Romero to helm King's Salem's Lot. They talked turkey but apparently Romero wanted more than a wing and a leg. Now his Laurel company has firmed a pact for George to direct King's *The Stand* — and then King's first original scenario, *Creepshow*, which may sound like The Richard Nixon Story but according to George, dovetails the horror genre with a comic book format. *National Lampoon* meets *Hammer Films*...?

SF AT LAST

Beautiful Jennifer O'Neill, who lost her role to Yvette Mimieux in *The Black Hole* because of a car smash just before shooting began, finally joins the fantasy business — in Canada. She's the leading lady of David Cronenberg's most expensive movie, *Scanners* — when ESP becomes a weapon of destruction. Also cast: Patrick McGowan and local stars Steven Lack, Lawrence Dane, Charles Shamat and Michael Ironside.

RE-ENTER CORMAN

Roger Corman is coming back to the sf field and in a bigger way than first planned. He's upped his 2.2 million dollar budget to 4.5 million for *Battle Beyond the Stars* in order to back a new special effects unit he's bought. Due out on American screens in July, the film is a debut from animator and tv commercials director, Jimmy Murakami. Also on Corman's 1980 production slate is another effects-filled fantasy, *Journey Beyond the Galaxy*, due to

cost five million dollars, his own *Last World War* scenario, and an sf-cum-horror shocker, *Humanoids from the Deep*. Roger's also bought the new Japanese moving, *Galaxy Express*. But it looks as if his own return to directing sf, planned for London, is now off until 1981.

KING & HOOPER

So who did direct the four-hour *Salem's Lot* for American CBS television? Tobe Hooper, that's who. And The Texas Chainsaw Massacre men got himself a helluva cast including David Soul, out of his *Hutch* for good and all, and James Mason. As a result of going straight, the major studios have taken Hooper to their hearts. He's now directing *Funhouse* — rabid horror despite the title — for Universal. His producers include Derek Power, for whom Tobe should have made *The Dark* starring William Devane, but he walked out on the project leaving Bud Cardos to finish the film.

SOUL & BAKSHI

Following Salem's Lot, David Soul's Topange Services Ltd has signed a year's pact with the brothers Warner — as actor, producer, director of film and tv movies. His plans include up to six tv movies mirroring "what's happening in our society". His deal leaves him free to set up other movies — and he's planning one movie in partnership with Ralph Bakshi, the Tolkien animator. They've penned a tale together in which Soul will be searching for his kidnapped son — end, but of course, for himself. One mild flaw thus far. They've no title.

GRADE & GRADE

Lord Lew Grade has been explaining his philosophy about movies. "We don't go by the budget. We go by the project. If we like the project, the budget is secondary." Nice words, Lew. Pity you still haven't found a worthwhile project among all those movie-sandwiches you make with tv only in mind, and stuffed with fedated stars in between two layers of indigestible bread. Check his record and you'll see what I mean. *Capricorn One* is the only decent movie his ITC combine has made. Now I hear he sold his Lee Majors movie, *Killerfish*, to tv in the United States before it's been cinema screened here or there. *Treasure of the Piranha*, he calls it *Stateside*. Or a licence to print even more money. If only he'd spend some of it on good movie-making! His sf entry, *Saturn 3*, opens in the States on February 15 and Lord Lew plans to "saturnize" America. Somehow I doubt if he's going to make it.

QUICK MOVE

What does an actor do as soon as he's finished a



Star Wars film? Follow Harrison Ford's lead and made a different kind of movie double quick. Billy Dee Williams has obviously taken Ford's advice. He's gone straight from being Baron Lando Calrissian in *The Empire Strikes Back* to hi-jacking the Eiffel Tower in the litigation-riddled movie of Alistair MacLean's *The Hostage Tower in Paris* — where also? His co-stars include Peter Fonda, Douglas Fairbanks Jr and two former 007 playmates, Britt Ekland and Maud Adams. And Kenny Baker, the little chap inside R2-D2's dustbin, has shot off into *The Elephant Man*. But no, he hasn't had a nose job end taken the lead role...

PRIZE TIME

And still in Paris... John Badham's *Dracula* swept the board at the ninth International Film Festival of Science Fiction and the Fantastic. The movie took the top prize, Frank Langella's rather campy Drac had the *Best Actor* nod and, naturally, John Williams took the music award. *Best Actress* was Linda Haynes for Gregory Goddell's *Human Experiments* horror from the United States. And as in last January's *Avoriaz* event, Colin Eggleston's wonderful *Long Weekend* from Australia did very well indeed — taking the Jury prize and the Critics' Prize, awarded by the Paris horror and sf publishing house, Les Editions du Masque. (Thinks: I once wrote a review of this film from Cannes 1978, perhaps Daz will decide to run it now...)

The Jury also gave special mentions to Valjko Buljic's *The Men to Destroy*, from Yugoslavia, and to Spanish actor Paul Nashy for defending the film *fantastique* in Spain. There was, however, no award for special effects, presumably because the selected films were less inclined to gore than fantasy and imagination. The East European block sent entries for the first time and were justly rewarded. As far as the audiences' vote was concerned, the best film at the festival was Jurej Harz' *Beauty and the Beast* from Czechoslovakia. Next year, the Paris event is expected to be a real biggie to celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary. They might even invite us for a change...

LUGOSI LOSES

The sound you hear is Bela Lugosi grinding his fangs... The California Supreme Court has ruled that his family does not own exclusive rights to his portrayal of Dracula. The Case goes back to 1966, when the actor's widow and son alleged Universal had taken property inherited from Lugosi (after his 1956 death) which had not been covered in the actor's original contract of 1930, when he first played the count with the impacted molars. The Lugosis were then awarded 72,000 dollars by the Los Angeles Superior Court. Now the higher court has bitten that ruling to pieces, stating that "the right to exploit the name and likeness is personal to the artist and must be exercised, if at all, by him during his lifetime." A bitter blow. Like a stake through the heart.



ROYAL RINGS

Denmark's Queen Margretha attended the Copenhagen premiere of *The Lord of the Rings* in December. *So what?* I hear you cry. I know our own royalty attends many movie premieres, and even once in a while actually get excited about heaving the best seat in the house, if the film is about horses, corgies or goons. But the Danish queen has a far greater personal interest in Tolkien's *Rings*. She illustrated a limited edition of the book, with Eric Fraser, and very good it was, too. I believe some copies are still available from The Folio Society in Burlington Arcade, London. Quite an investment...

FEST FEAST

We wouldn't mind a ticket to the annual Chicago Science Fiction festival, either. Judging by its fifth outing late last year, it's quite a beefsteak of good, bad and ugly movies. The event opened with Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), with its original frightening climax end not the upbeat ending usually seen on American TV re-runs. Special-effects had their place in a variety of movies, from Douglas Trumbull's *Silent Running*

LOCH THERE!

It's Nessie time again... I Presumably because *The Times* is back with us, interest has been re-aroused in tales of the thing at the bottom of the Scottish loch. While nothing has been heard for eons for the David Frost movie idea about the Loch Ness Monster (well, after interviewing Nixon, one monster is enough in anyone's life), The Australians are planning such a venture: *Search at Loch Ness*. Co-producer of this 8-million dollar movie is Elliott Schick, man behind *The Earthling* down-under with William Holden. Script stems from Richard Chapman and Derek Tennent, whoever they are, and shooting will take place this autumn in Australia, of all places — plus locations, of course, in or on Loch Ness itself. Should be good for the tourist trade.

COMIC MART NOTICE

Here is a notice. Unfortunately, the dreaded deadline doom has struck again. Last month an ad appeared within our pages to announce the next comic mart at the Central Hall, Westminster. The idea was that the date should have read "19th January 1980" not "19th April 1980". Nevertheless, there is a comic mart on 19th April anyway, so we'd just thought we'd take this opportunity to confuse every one even further. All clear?

(1972) to George Pal's *When Worlds Collide* (1951), which won an Oscar for its affects. Further tributes were held in honour of Roger Corman and Ray Harryhausen, including a rare screening of his work for Fred F. Seer's *Earth vs The Flying Saucers* (1956), which perhaps, was bad enough to have been in the festival's special night of 'some of the worst and funniest' fantasy films ever made. Would you believe: *Cat Women of the Moon*, *War of the Colossal Beast* and *Invasion of the Saucer Men*...?



STARBURST LETTERS

Brosnan Defensive

John Brosnan replies to the letters published in Starburst 17 about his review of Alien (in Starburst 14)...

Okay, okay, I admit I was wrong about the anti-gravity. There was a brief mention over the intercom as the Nostromo takes off from the planet. I only picked it up the second time I saw the movie because on the first occasion the sound track was so badly balanced the extraneous sound effects blotted out the dialogue for the first 40 minutes or so (this was later rectified by the distributors). And even on the second occasion the order to switch on the anti-gravity didn't exactly stand out from the surrounding chatter. Blink and you'd miss it. Anyway, that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it...

Dan O'Bannon's letter is, of course, very interesting, particularly his description of his original story and how it differed from the final movie. Obviously the screenplay that I saw, back in late 1977 or early '78, wasn't his and Ronald Shusett's original but one of the rewrites by Walter Hill or David Giler (it was shown to me by a publisher at the time when the novelisation rights were on offer). It's all a bit hazy now but I do remember that there wasn't any reference to either a crashed alien spaceship or a pyramid. It was also made quite clear that the whole thing was a company plot — the alien was a genetically engineered killing machine created by the company for purposes of commercial exploitation. The crew of the Nostromo had been set up as unwilling guinea pigs to test its effectiveness while the robot supervised its return to Earth. This seemed quite ingenious to me at the time but I agree with O'Bannon that his original version was much more logical as well as

being better science fiction.

As for my statement that Ridley Scott cut out the cocoon sequence himself — I was told this by H.R. Giger, the film's designer. I'm glad to learn that it wasn't Scott after all as it struck me as being a silly decision. That sequence was crucial to understanding the motives of the alien's actions as well as completing the cycle of transformations that the aliens undergo in order to reproduce. I hope that one day we might get the opportunity of seeing the film with that sequence reinserted but I suppose that's unlikely.

I'd like to end by saying that despite its flaws, and despite the fact that it works better as a horror film than an sf one, *Alien* remains a considerable achievement and certainly the best science fiction I've seen in a long time. And after recently suffering through *Star Trek* and *The Black Hole* it seems to get better and better in retrospect.

John Brosnan, London.

Ape Errors

I am writing this letter because of a few mistakes I have noticed in *Starburst* 16. In the *Planet of the Apes* article you have made some errors over the dates of release of some of the films. On page 30, which starts off the article, there are two pictures: one is the cover painting from a Marvel comic and the picture below is credited as being from *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*. But the red suits the apes were wearing lead me to be pretty sure that the scene was taken from *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and not *Battle*. I have seen *Battle* twice and am pretty sure you are mistaken.

On page 31 you state that *Planet of the Apes* was a 1968 release. But in the caption for the picture on the

same page you credit *Planet* as 1969. I am sure that 1968 is the correct date for *Planet of the Apes*.

Page 35 has a scene of the militant gorillas from the film *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* dated 1970. Later you say it came out in 1973, which I believe is the correct year. It was *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* which came out in 1970.

Perhaps you can explain these mistakes because, as you might well agree, it is very confusing. I enjoy your magazine very much and am very interested in science fiction, but I like to get the facts right.

N. Siampourou, London.

You're right, of course. We have no excuse. But thanks for setting the record straight.



Unexpected Information

Congratulations on *Starburst*, perhaps the most informative magazine on science fiction on sale at the moment, but I am afraid I must point out a mistake. In issue 9 your feature on Roald Dahl's *Tales of the Unexpected* mentioned that Mr Dahl had not let anybody use his stories for tv apart from Alfred Hitchcock, but Mr Richard Davis who is my godfather and lives with my family and I, adapted *William and Mary* for his tv series *Late Night Horror* using

Mr Dahl's permission, (as you will recall *Late Night Horror* was the first drama series on television to go out in colour in the 1960s and was established by my godfather, Mr Davis, whilst he was story editor for BBC Television Drama). He has also edited numerous science fiction and horror anthologies including the famous *Year's Best Horror Stories* series and has recently had a non-fiction book published by Hutchinsons called *I've Seen a Ghost* which is about actors and ghosts, in fact, true ghost stories from show business. My godfather also worked on the science fiction series *Out of the Unknown*.

Suggestions for future issues: please could we have some features on the new *Star Trek* movie, *Twilight Zone* and *One Step Beyond*.

Altogether *Starburst* is the best magazine out much better than any of the others. Keep up the good work!

David Green, Dorset.

Nigel Kneale Writes

The interview in *Starburst* 16 reads very well and has the additional virtue of being highly accurate — two elements which are not always combined, as I've discovered a few times lately.

It ends a bit suddenly. Were you in need of room to get the art work in? To be fair the pictures were well arranged.

The book reviews (in the same issue) were very generous — Hutchinsons should be pleased with coverage like that. (Not to mention the TV SF article).

I feel I have been done very proud by *Starburst*.

Nigel Kneale, London.

Send all comments to: *Starburst* Letters, Marvel Comics, Jadwin House, 205-211 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

DAN O' BANNON'S UNSEEN ALIEN

After John Brosnan's review of *Alien* in *Starburst 14*, we were flooded with mail, both pro and con. But the most interesting letter we received was from the person who knows the concept of *Alien* best . . . Dan O'Bannon.

I greatly enjoyed your article on Alien in Starburst 14. Aside from a couple of factual errors, I felt that Mr Brosnan's essay was most perceptive, and his views reflected my own.

The errors:

"The original script," says Mr Brosnan, "reveals that the eggs are part of a genetic engineering experiment being carried out by the same Earth Company that employs the crew of the *Nostramo* . . ." You will go insane trying to figure out how and why the "company" set them up to discover the Alien. Mr Brosnan's real error was in trying to figure out what the original script was like; I cannot imagine how anyone could, since 20th-Century-Fox has gone to such lengths to bury it. But for posterity, here is a nutshell description of the ways in which the original script by me and Ronnie Shusett differed from the filmed version:

The commercial mining ship *Nostromo* is owned wholly by its crew, a group of independent miners who have combined their personal resources in a speculative venture of free enterprise, hoping to find mineral lodes that will repay their investment and make their fortunes. Having succeeded, they are returning to Earth when the ship's computer interrupts their voyage to inform them of a transmission of unknown origin. They are faced with a crucial decision: will they ignore the transmission or investigate? Being their own bosses, they are under no outside pressure to investigate, but this is the first contact Man has ever made with any intelligent nonhuman life form, and the potential benefits to the discoverer are limitless. Being adventurers and profiteers, they land.



The source of the (untranslated) transmission proves to be a wrecked alien spacecraft, shot full of immense holes as though the ship had been riddled with impossibly corrosive acid. Dead at the controls is the skeleton of the alien pilot. The transmission turns out to be an automatic recording, which has been repeating for God knows how long. The question is: what killed the crew? Scrawled onto the console before the dead alien pilot is a symbol, a hastily scrawled triangle. Clearly he was trying to leave a message; but what?

While they are puzzling over the meaning of the triangle, the storm outside clears up momentarily, enabling them to see to the horizon. There on the cliffs is a pyramid, instantly suggestive of the triangle. Is this what the pilot was trying to indicate? They go to explore it.

The pyramid is ancient, primitive, and clearly of a different alien derelict ship. We are dealing with a different alien here: the dead ship appears to be a visitor from

elsewhere; the pyramid seems indigenous. Walking around it, they can find no entrance; any entrance must have been buried under the shifting sands of time. So Kane uses his climbing gear to crawl to the top of the monolith, where he finds an open shaft going straight down.

Meanwhile back at the Earthship, the computer has finally succeeded in translating the transmission. It means: "DO NOT LAND".

But the explorers are cut off from radio contact and do not learn of this development, so Kane goes down the shaft. At the bottom he finds a bizarre tomb or shrine filled with incomprehensible paintings and hieroglyphics, which appear to have a religious significance. In the centre of the tomb is an altar, surrounded by egg-like objects.

From this point there are only two differences in the original script worth mentioning. (1) After returning to the Earthship, the crew studies the films Kane shot in the tomb. The hieroglyphs describe the life cycle of the native Aliens. Reproduction for them is extraordinarily difficult and complex, requiring a host and much supervision, as a result of which their life cycle has become central to their culture. The fatal flaw of this species appears to be the biological necessity of overexploitation of the biosphere; and the Earthmen speculate that this may be the reason for the lifelessness of the planet and the apparent disappearance of the species. (2) At the end of the story is a missing scene which appears to be well known to the public: the "cocoon" scene, in which Ripley finds Captain Dallas spun into a web in the hold of the Earthship. Brett and Parker have also been spun into cocoons, which are in the process of metamorphosing into the very same type of egg found in the pyramid, thus completing the Alien's life cycle.

There are other differences between what I wrote and what was filmed, but these are the ones most pertinent to the concept.

Ridley Scott did not cut the cocoon sequence; that was a decision of the studio executives (the "company"). Ripley fought to keep it in.

I certainly agree that the script that was committed to the film was self-contradictory, confusing, one-dimensional, clichéd, and bargain-basement as science fiction. I get a lot of pain from that, because it wasn't necessary. It was creative vandalism of a story that aspired to more.

You used a quotation by me in which I criticised Messrs Giler & Hill's rewrites. This particular quotation was a remark I made to someone who worked for *Cinefantastique* magazine, which they attempted to print against my objections.

I didn't want it printed because I didn't want to knock my colleagues publicly; editor Fred Clark grudgingly agreed to kill it. I wonder where you got hold of it.

I'm glad you think it works as a horror film; I think so too. Of all the reviews and articles and letters to the editor I have read (comments directly to my face don't count, because of well-meaning self-censorship), only one person has said the picture didn't scare them. Knowing how scary most supposedly scary pictures are, it is gratifying to read one person after another saying the picture frightened them, left them drained, they walked out on wobbly legs. I have sat in theatres watching seas of hypnotized faces, all staring unblinking as one (many of them from behind their fingers). It does what a film should do: unites the audience into a single viewing unit, all reacting as one and all watching.

You don't get this effect, this terror, from random scenes of violence. Violence is not scary. The anticipation of violence is scary. A scene like the chest-buster is necessary to give us something to fear. Ten seconds of the film is horror; the other two hours is waiting for this horror — and the waiting is the movie. Every time somebody walks down the hall, we're flinching. And when the horror finally comes, it must be too horrible. The fear is in knowing that the psychotic filmmaker will do anything.

But if the film has genius it lies in its visuals — the design, and mood, the atmosphere, that gritty texture you can reach out and scrape off the walls, those nightmarish shapes no human has ever imagined. It is the first (and maybe the last?) film in which an alien and its artifacts look ... alien.

Those visuals are almost the exclusive work of three wonderful men: Ron Cobb, H.R. Giger, and Ridley Scott. The first is American, the second Swiss, the third English. You can see the extraordinary richness you get from combining the aesthetics of many cultures. The film is a feast for the eye.

But it is a famine for the mind, and for those who would like to be fed, I am preparing a novel. Since you were deprived of the opportunity to unravel the marvels of one creature Man has never known, I am investigating another. I have recently discovered the existence of a species of living thing so astounding, and so dreadful, that I can no longer concern myself with the unsuitable Alien. This new life form is *much closer to home*. My hands sweat as I think of it. If I survive my investigations, I will reveal *everything* in my book. It is called *THEY BITE*, and if you all buy lots of copies I will finally get enough power to make the next film the way we all want it to be. ●



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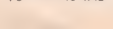
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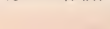
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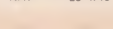
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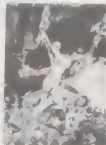
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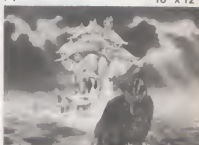
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THE BLACK HOLE

If you want to learn anything about black holes don't bother going to see this picture but if all you're after is an occasionally entertaining imitation of Star Wars mixed with some watered-down 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and a dash of Disney-style religion then *The Black Hole* will be right up your cosmological alley. Personally the *last* thing I wanted to see was yet another Star Wars imitation so I was less than impressed...

The publicity build-up for this picture has been huge by Disney's usual standards. "The most expensive and ambitious Disney film of all time!" "Five years in the making!" "A budget of over £10,000,000!" "One of the film world's most unique productions ever!" And along with the publicity came a shroud of secrecy, mainly centering on the film's climax. Apparently it was so audacious,

so mind-boggling, that the leading players weren't even permitted to know about it and the final pages were removed from their scripts. *Gosh!* I said to myself, always a sucker for this type of publicity hype, *the ending must be really something!* Well, it's something alright...

Black holes are a very strange phenomenon. In theory they are created when a star of three or more times the mass of our sun collapses in upon itself. As the collapse continues the density of the material within the core of the dying star gets so condensed it eventually becomes a singularity: a point of zero size with infinite density. This is the black hole itself. Around the black hole is an area where the gravitational pull is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape from it. The edge of this area —

the point of no return for any object approaching the hole — is known as the event horizon. Once past the event horizon an object, such as a spaceship, would be obliterated though by then the crew would have long since been crushed to death by the gravitational pull. Scientists believe that the forces within a black hole are so powerful that the natural laws of physics no longer apply, which has led to sf writers postulating that black holes might be utilised for faster-than-light travel. The idea is that if you could pass *through* the singularity you might emerge without any time lapses in another part of the galaxy, providing, of course, you could avoid being compressed into nothingness on the way in...



**A REVIEW OF DISNEY'S BIGGEST SF EPIC SINCE
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA BY JOHN BROSAN.**

Because no light can escape from a black hole it is more or less invisible and could only be detected if it happens to blot out stars in the background. One might also be detected by material being sucked into it — matter such as dust and gas would start to heat up as it neared the event horizon and as a result the black hole might be surrounded by a glow of energy. That is, provided the hole happened to be situated in an area of space where there was plenty of such debris about. If not, you might not know you were even *near* a black hole until it was too late.

For the sake of visual interest the makers of *The Black Hole* have opted for showing their black hole at the centre of a cloud of whirling gas but they fail to suggest that the hole would, in reality, be a three-dimensional entity — a *sphere* of nothingness. Instead they've taken the

"term hole literally and so their creation" resembles a giant, two dimensional whirlpool leading down into some sort of cosmic drain pipe. Visually impressive but not very lively.

They have also decided to take a theological approach to the phenomenon. This is hinted at early on in the picture when one of the characters says, as he stares at the black hole: "whenever I see one of these things I always expect a figure with red eyes and horns to appear out of it." Later another character says that the hole could lead into the very mind of God . . . so it should come as no surprise when the end of the film becomes a crudely literal realization of these metaphysical suggestions.

This religious ending was presumably what had the Disney executives so excited but I can't say that it affected me the same way, having sat through a similar religious experience at the climax

of *Star Trek* only the week before. Both films, of course, owe the inspiration for their endings to 2001: *A Space Odyssey* but neither come close to capturing or recreating the sense of wonder that Kubrick's film generated.

All this may make *The Black Hole* sound unnaturally heavy for a Disney picture but rest assured it has the intellectual weight of a pea and the serious bits are few and far between. For the rest of the time it's all *Star Wars* type action and Disney type comedy. The latter chiefly revolves around a "cute" little robot called V.I.N.cent who has Orphan Annie's eyes and Roddy McDowell's voice — not the most attractive combination by a long shot. George Lucas has a lot to answer for in creating Artoo Deetoo and starting all this cute robot rubbish. Even worse, Vincent meets up with a similar

"BLACK HOLES: THE GREATEST CRISIS EVER FACED BY PHYSICS."

Source: Physicist John Wheeler Time Magazine 1978.

A black hole is a place where the conventional "laws" of nature do not apply.

Anybody thinking that accepts black holes must reject many comfortable theories about space and time. The universe is not, as was once thought, serene and unchanging. It is the scene of incredible events: of exploding galaxies and stars, of colossal reverberating back from its very birth.

Whole stars can vanish within black holes, crushed out of existence, where has their matter gone? To another universe? In another time?

Scientists have all the questions, and plenty of mathematical equations. Yet the answers are known tantalizingly out of reach.

But what a great subject to make an action-packed movie out of!

WHAT IS A BLACK HOLE?

A black star flares up and then, as it cools, contracts. As it shrinks, it becomes smaller and smaller, and ever denser. It

eventually becomes so small that it is no longer visible.

As it grows, a black hole attracts everything that comes near it. The light from the star that is falling in is pulled in, and the light from the star that is falling in is pulled in.



A dying star shrinks down to this, weighing billions of tons.

But it has become infinitely dense.

And exerts infinitely high gravitational force. This force sucks away anything and everything in its path. Asteroids, Planets, Suns. Nothing can escape from a black hole. Not even light.

Then what?

There are many theories. Time may slow down, and finally stop at the black hole's edge.

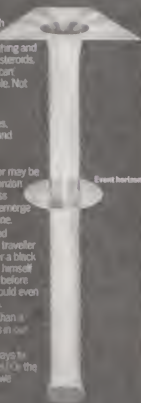
Or a space-time corridor may be set up, with an event horizon where matter could pass from our universe and emerge into a totally different one.

Or time could be warped completely. So a space traveller could theoretically enter a black hole, and suddenly find himself back where he started, before he'd even set out. He could even watch himself doing so.

There may be more than a million black holes in our galaxy alone.

Are they gateways to other universes? Or the end of time as we know it?

Our universe



Elsewhere universe

model robot who has the voice of that familiar cowboy actor, Slim Pickens! The scenes between these two will either have you chuckling or chucking up. Rock bottom is reached in the sequence where the Pickens robot, dying in McDowell's "arms", gives a heart-rending speech which ends with: "You'll always take a part of me wherever you go". I was expecting at that point the robot to actually break off a piece of himself and hand it over but no such luck.

The plot concerns a huge spaceship — the USS Cygnus — that has been missing in space for 20 years and is accidentally located by the crew of another ship in the vicinity of a black hole. They discover that its sole human inhabitant is a scientist called Dr Hans Reinhardt. According to him all the other members of the crew headed back to Earth years ago and he seems surprised when he is told that they never made it. It doesn't take long to work out that Dr Reinhardt is the archetypal mad scientist, particularly the way the usually excellent German actor Maximilian Schell plays him — he chews up more of the surrounding scenery than the black hole itself.

Reinhardt's crew consists of a large number of robots — some of them con-

Reinhardt's deputy is a robot called Maximilian.

ventional and others with mirrored faces and wearing monk-like habits. The chief robot, and Reinhardt's second-in-command, is a large, armoured monster called Maximilian. Max is obviously supposed to be the film's version of Darth Vader as well as representing Reinhardt's evil, uncontrollable alter-ego, an allusion subtly telegraphed to the audience by giving him the same name as the star (nudge, nudge). Reinhardt himself is a mixture of Captain Nemo and Captain Ahab — he has deliberately cut himself off from the rest of the human race in order to devote his life totally to his obsession with the black hole which has become to him the equivalent of Ahab's white whale. He is determined to journey into the hole and discover what lies beyond, no matter what the cost.

His unwelcome visitors subsequently discover that the other members of the crew never did leave the ship but are still on board — as Reinhardt's slaves. He has turned them into cyborgs — part human, part machine — and they now work for him disguised as the mysteriously cowed robots. On learning this the others attempt to escape but are prevented by Reinhardt's robots. There follows several battles between robots and humans (and robots and robots) and finally the survivors all end up being dragged into the black hole to meet their various metaphysical fates...

Above: The press brochure from Walt Disney studios explains the nature of the black hole. Below: Captain Dan Holland (Robert Forster) saves Dr Kate McCree (Yvette Mimieux) from being turned into a cyborg.





The Black Hole (1979)

Maximilian Schell (as Dr. Hans Reinhardt), Anthony Perkins (Dr. Alex Durant), Robert Forster (Captain Dan Holland), Joseph Bottoms (Lieutenant Charles Pizer), Yvette Mimieux (Dr. Kate McCrae), Ernest Borgnine (Harold Booth), Tommy McLoughlin (Captain S.T.A.R.).

Directed by Gary Nelson, Screenplay by Jeb Rosebrook and Gerry Day, Story by Jeb Rosebrook, Bob Barbash and Richard Landau, Director of Photography Frank Phillips, Music by John Barry, Production Design by Peter Ellenshaw, Art Directors John B. Mansbridge, Al Roelofs and Robert McCall, Edited by Gregg McLaughlin, Director of Miniature Photography Art Cruikshank, Miniature Effects Created and Supervised by Peter Ellenshaw, Composite Optical Photography Eustace Lycott, Mechanical Effects Supervisor Danny Lee, Matte Artist Harrison Ellenshaw, Produced by Ron Miller. A Walter Disney Film Production. Time: 97 mins

Cert: A

Above: Dr. Hans Reinhardt (Maximilian Schell) conducts a tour of his ship, The USS Cygnus. Left: One of the sinister robot security guards aboard Reinhardt's ship. Right: Some examples of the promotional brochures that have poured out of the Disney publicity offices

For all its spectacle *The Black Hole* is a disappointment.

asphyxiating the humans instantly, but I wasn't going to mention that.)

But for all its undoubted spectacle *The Black Hole* is fundamentally a disappointment. Buried within it somewhere is a serious picture with an adult theme but only fragments of it remain — the Disney people decided to play it safe and take

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Special photographic effects
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"for every picture" and
"for every picture"

"\$17,500,000 TO MAKE
& LIKE NO OTHER DISNEY FILM
EVER MADE."

This is a historical and most recent in Disney's history
To produce the most convincing portrayal of a black hole, on the
edge of space, never before seen, Disney has used the
most advanced techniques and equipment

"BLACK HOLES... WHERE LIGHT
IS LOCKED IN FOR ETERNITY...
WHERE EVEN TIME IS FROZEN...
FOR ALL TIME."

WHERE WHOLE PLANETS ARE
SUCKED INEXORABLY IN AND
PULVERISED TO NOTHINGNESS."

The special effects, as you might expect from the Disney studio, are generally of a very high standard, though occasionally the wires holding up the robots, and the humans, are all too visible on screen. The sequences at the beginning of the picture where the crew of the first ship encounter both the black hole and the USS Cygnus are very impressive. At first the Cygnus, which resembles a vast Victorian glasshouse, is in darkness but then it comes to life in a blaze of light that is quite breath-taking. The effects in *Star Trek* may have cost more but lack such moments of imagination and style. The general break-up of the Cygnus at the end of the film is also spectacular, in particular one brief scene where a huge glowing meteor rolls through the interior

of the ship like a giant red snowball while tiny human figures can be seen scurrying away in front of it. (Yes, I know... it wouldn't be glowing because there wouldn't be any oxygen and all the air would have shot out through the huge hole it made on the way in, thus the easy way out, eschewing originality for warmed-over scenes from *Star Wars* and sure-fire laughs from the "funny" robots. You can't, however, have it both ways and hope to be successful; you can't jump from metaphysics to slapstick comedy and then back again and expect your audience to follow you... and so *The Black Hole* ends up an uneasy mixture of two opposing styles, with the result that the various parts add up to a rather bleak whole (sorry).

Still, on the whole (sorry again, I can't help it), I found it more fun than the slow and portentous *Star Trek*, plus the fact that it's thirty minutes *shorter* with a running time of only 97 minutes. In these days of long, long movies that's quite an asset!

RECORD WORLD

This month, *Starburst* welcomes a special guest record reviewer better-known for his special effects on such BBC tv shows as *Blake's 7* and *Dr Who*, Mat Irvine.



BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25th CENTURY

Buck Rogers is rare in present day SF film circles in that it is an exact contemporary of *Battlestar Galactica* being produced hot on the heels of the letter by the same company, Universal, and the same producer, Glen Larson. In addition the same composer supplied the musical score - Stu Phillips.

Overall the score, like the film, is far less pretentious than its predecessor and consequently rather more convincing.

A short burst of suitable special uneerthiness starts the recording, taking us through Buck's five centuries of sleep and leads into the opening theme song, actually written by Glen Larson, and which I think suits the mood very well. I hope it is retained for the tv series. The vocal is by Kipp Lennon.

All the main themes have that slightly tongue-in-cheek approach. The Draconic Vessel theme is suitably menacing; Princess Ardale's seduction theme is suitably seductive and Buck's heroic theme any intrepid space traveller would be proud to own (although it did remind me of the theme to one of those early 60s tv cop shows *Checkmate* - if anyone remembers that!). In addition it is difficult to remain serious when confronted by the ungainly gait of Twiki and Dr Theo.

All in all nothing amazing comes out of this record, but it's reasonably pleasant to the ear and is far less trouble to listen to than *Galactica*.

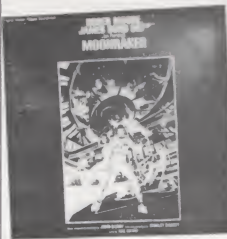
MCA Records. Cat: MCF 3013. Price: £5.30.

MOONRAKER

James Bond and John Barry could be fairly safely said to be synonymous. Admittedly other composers have contributed to the series. George Martin, Marvin Hamlisch and let us not forget Monty Norman who, after all, did write

the original James Bond theme for *Dr No*. However John Barry has written more Bond scores than anyone else and in particular the latest extravaganza *Moonraker*. Unfortunately in the same way that Bond films these days tend to be fairly indistinguishable from one another in places, the film scores also appear to be heading this way.

The layout of a Bond film score is reasonably predictable. An opening theme song with the title somehow included in the lyrics (some achieve this more successfully than others), plus a set of variations on the main and past Bond themes, ending finally with a reprise of the beginning. All James Bond films can be termed "fantasy" to a certain extent and 007 has dealt with space subjects before in *Thunderball* and *You Only Live Twice*, but *Moonraker* is really the first time he has been put into an accepted sf situation.



So how has the music kept pace with the current trends? Overall it hasn't, it's still "Bond".

John Barry was probably correct in not going the *Close Encounters*/Alien route which would not have fitted into this type of film, but instead opted to stay with typical Bond musical formulas. Oddly, potentially the best track, by the sound of the title *Space Laser Battle* (side 1, track 2) doesn't come over as particularly special at all. Only in the first track of side 2 *Flight into Space* does this side of the proceedings emerge. It is an unusually long track for such a record, nearly 6½ minutes, but then this sequence was fairly long in screen time. The score is still "Bond" but it has eerie touches in places and passages almost come through like Vaughan Williams' *Tallis Fantasia* (excellent space music itself!).

It is not the most memorable of the Bond sound tracks, personally I liked *On Her*

Majesty's Secret Service the best, but it would complete a Bond soundtrack collection to date and is pleasant as an atmospheric background. *United Artists Records*. Cat: UAG 30247. Price: £5.30.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Galactica as a film I found rather disjointed and likewise the soundtrack.

Produced by Glen Larson for Universal, the score was written, for the most part, by Stu Phillips and as is common these days, played by an actual orchestra, instead of a group of session musicians. Either this film was lucky, or it had booked well in advance, for they managed to procure the talents of LA's only symphony orchestra the Los Angeles Philharmonic no less, with Phillips conducting. *Galactica*, of any of the soundtracks reviewed, tends to epitomize the problems of transferring the various themes from their proper place into a non-visual, purely aural medium. Sometimes this works, sometimes it doesn't. The highly successful *Star Wars* score has to be the yardstick by which to judge the rest for every theme was distinctive and tended to stick in one's brain.

With *Galactica* however things aren't so successful and not even the main title music is all that memorable. Individual snippets stand out from time to time, for example the main theme has a reprise in a track entitled *Exploration* where in fact it is definitely more distinctive and there is a plaintive theme on the flute during *Cassiopeia* and *Starbuck* which stirred me enough to play that track again.

On side 2, the Ovions bring an insectile touch to the music during *Escape from the Ovion Mines* and I found the staccato beat of the side drum very effective in *The Red Nova*.

Galactica has its own version of the Cantina scene from that other film with the song *It's Love, Love, Love*, written by a trio including



RECORD WORLD

the producer. The song is performed by a group who can really be described as a cross between The Supremes and Paul Robson, the *Space Angels* and I'm surprised it wasn't issued as a single – or maybe it was.

The record is packaged in a very colourful cover with scenes of mayhem and destruction going on all around, but it's only after you've stared at it for some time that you realise that the subject of the film's title, the Bettestar Galactica itself, is nowhere to be seen. There are Vipers, Raiders, Cylons, Ovions, most of the cast and the doggit, but no Galactica; odd!

MCA Records. Cat: MCF 2860. Price: £5.30.

ALIEN

Film music tends to start off with one overriding disadvantage, that it is just that – film music. In the majority of movie experiences, the score has been composed to fit the visual images for the best possible effect, but whether the music can stand up in its own right is a completely different matter.

The score for *Alien*, by veteran film composer Jerry Goldsmith, is, dare one say it, typical film music, but although sections could be termed fairly noisy, in keeping with appropriate sections of the film, I found the overall effect very enjoyable listening. If slightly disturbing.

One of the main factors for this is the incredibly haunting main theme that opens and closes the film and emerges from time to time during the proceedings. The first time it is heard it is played on a solo muted trumpet; an instrument guaranteed to provide an appropriate atmosphere and very reminiscent of the way Gershwin uses it during his *Piano Concerto* and *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Besides Gershwin I was reminded of another composer while listening, Vaughan Williams. Sections of the score seem to have an affinity with his *Symphony No 7*, the *Symphony Antartica*, which is rather fitting as this music was itself originally a film score, written for Scott of the Antarctic. Wastes – be they of snow or space – seem to lead to similar approaches in music.

The tracks are laid out in non-chronological order, with only the opening and closing themes being where they should be. Consequently you get "The Face Hugger" before "Breekaway" and "Acid Test" before "The Landing" as far as side 1 is concerned, but this appears to be legitimate practice in sound track recordings and makes the individual musical sections flow more logically. I am also sure that I detected a trace of the *Close Encounters* theme in "The Landing"; (itself a modified version of the old plainsong chant *Dies Irae*



much loved by composers, especially Rachmaninov); but this may not have been intentional. Similarly "The Alien Planet" on side 2 shows traces of Peter Schickel's *Silent Running* music.

The record sleeve is adorned with the distinctive, but I still maintain, slightly irrelevant Alien "egg", but I could have asked for more information on the background of the music as was provided, say, with the *Star Wars*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Close Encounters* discs. However it is nice to see due credit being given to the players, not the LSO this time, but the National Philharmonic Orchestra. Film scores these days seem to require a virtuoso orchestra to cope with them.

Overall I find the recording better every time I listen and I strongly urge anyone who has dismissed it, to sit down and re-listen, preferably on decent equipment and I think you'll hear a lot more than initially seems apparent.

20th Century-Fox Records. Cat: T 593. Price: £5.49.

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE By Tomita

The Japanese composer/arranger Isao Tomita has continued his recent delving into sf musical subjects with his latest recording which has been given the enigmatic title of *The Bermuda Triangle*.

This is actually the sixth Tomita album, and the third with a "space" theme. Unfortunately the fourth album, the first "space" record which was the Tomita version of Holst's *The Planets* has been withdrawn from the catalogues. However the first 3, and the previous most recent issue *Kosmos* are still readily available.

Besides being a successful composer in his own right in his native country, Tomita is best

known through these recordings as an arranger of established classical composers' music; some well known and some not so well known. With *The Bermuda Triangle* he takes these ideas one stage further than with *Kosmos* and this time each piece has a new title that fits into the overall theme indicated by the main title. These range from *A Spaceship Lands Emitting Silvery Light* (track 1, side 1) to *The Visionary Flight to the 1448 Nebular Group of the Bootes* (track 5, side 2). However don't let this put you off as the arrangements, if you like Tomita, are very good. Personally I find his electronic versions amongst the most acceptable in this genre.

As far as the original composers are concerned the emphasis is on Prokofiev with excerpts from his *1st Violin Concerto*, *Scythian Suite*, *Symphonies No 5 and 6* and the *Romeo and Juliet* ballet music. The last I know fairly well, but the way Tomita uses the excerpt fits into the overall pattern so beautifully that initially I just could not place this familiar piece.

Sibelius's *Valse Triste* gets similar treatment and emerges as *A World of Different Dimensions*, and also has an uncredited reprise at the end. In addition the synthesiser sequence from *Close Encounters* by John Williams appears as *Venus in a Space Uniform Shining in Fluorescent Light*. Tomita echoes his own recordings with a reprise of the R2-D2 theme from *Kosmos* and even goes back to his first recording *Snowflakes are Dancing* with a snatch of *The Gollywog's Cakewalk*.

The record sleeve manages to combine most elements of whatever the Bermuda Triangle seems to mean to most people, with ships and aircraft, underwater pyramids, a large expanse of ocean and what are presumably underwater spirits. The sleeve writings emphasise that this is "A Musical Fantasy of Science Fiction" and give a very complete listing of all the music adapted, even down to which movements have been used. There is also a very complete listing of all electronic equipment Tomita uses to create the sounds which includes 7 tape recorders, 3 mixers, 2 synthesisers and a computer. The sleeve notes maintain that a coded message can be found in the tracks on both sides, although the track listing only mentions side 2, track 2. Apparently this will reveal a message if fed into a Tarel programmed computer. I've yet to verify this although knowing computers these days, anything is possible!

RCA/Red Seal Records. Cat: RL 12885. Price: £5.30.

BOOK WORLD

Review by Alex Carpenter



FOR FOLLOWERS OF FANTASY ART, *THE STUDIO*, IS AN IMPORTANT EVENT. THIS ISSUE *STARBURST* DEVOTES AN ENTIRE BOOK WORLD COLUMN TO COVERAGE OF THE BOOK.

THE STUDIO: Jeffrey Jones, Michael Kaluta, Barry Windsor-Smith, Berni Wrightson

The Studio is more than a collection of the art of the four young artists who work out of that loft in lower Manhattan. It is also an attempt to give the reader some insight into the artists themselves and the reasons that they work as they do. The combination of art and information makes it of greater value than such popular fantasy art books as *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Fantastic Art of Boris Vallejo*.

Those who consider themselves part of comics fandom will need no introduction to at least three of the artists — the fourth is Jeff Jones who, whilst he has worked in comics (notably the lauded *Idyl* strip for the American



humour/satire magazine *National Lampoon*) has not caught the attention of the collectors quite as much as the others. As is so often the case, this absence of fan adoration is not the result of lack of talent but rather of lack of exposure — as far as I can recall Jones' work has been seen only very rarely between the covers of a Marvel comic and never has it been used by DC. Apart from the aforementioned *National Lampoon*, it is only Warren magazines that have used his abilities to any extent and then only infrequently.

Although I find his work slightly "strange", it does have a very definite appeal and a glance through the pages of this book will certainly show any doubters that he is the equal of the other three if not at times their master. For those interested in his work a collection of his *Idyl* strips have also been made available in book form (*Idyl* price £3.25) from the same publishers. It is a reprint of a long out-of-print American book and, although "strange" (that word again), is well worth seeking out.

However, what of the other three? I feel that they need no introduction but, for those



Left to right: Barry Smith, Mike Kaluta



of you to whom the names may mean little — if anything...

Mika Kaluta has had the majority of his comic work published by DC although both he and Berni Wrightson did work for some of the less well-known horror magazines of the early seventies. As with Wrightson Kaluta made his initial impact via short horror stories in DC's anthology comics (*House of Mystery*, *Witching Hour*, *House of Secrets et al*) but it was with his work on the adaptations of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter of Mars* and *Conan of Venus* stories for their Korak comic (and later in *Weird Worlds*) that the fans first began to take notice. However, it was on *The Shadow* that he really reached his pinnacle doing only issues 1 to 4 and 6 but it was enough to establish his name. From that point on his output began to dwindle until recently when he returned to DC where he has been doing covers for their dollar books, including their mystery anthologies — which is where it all began!

For many fans Conan and Barry Smith (now Windsor-Smith) are synonymous for it was on that Marvel comic that the artist gained his

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FANTASTIC VOYAGE

THIS MONTH, AS PART OF OUR ONGOING STARBURST SF CLASSICS SERIES, WE PRESENT A MOVIE RETROSPECTIVE WITH A DIFFERENCE BY REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TISE VAHIMAGI.

Below: The wires that suspended the stars of *Fantastic Voyage* twenty to thirty feet above the studio floor, were wiped with acid to cut down light reflection. Unfortunately this caused them to snap too easily.



We're told that listening to other people's conversations is rude. My feeling is that it may be rude, but only if you're caught doing it. Most of the time it can be several things: funny, informative, curious, frightening, enlightening or just plain dull. It is something that can also be highly addictive, leading on to the "hard stuff" such as taking up lip reading.

One of the best places to practice the art of eavesdropping is on the London Underground system. The tube trains, especially on London's Northern Line, can be the Mecca for Those-Who-Listen, a veritable Aibert Hall for connoisseurs of other people's conversations.

The "concert" of the year came along quite by accident one morning on the aforesaid Underground line. It was the morning following BBC-TV's network screening of *Fantastic Voyage*.

Of course, nobody ever really sets out

with the specific intention of listening-in on the conversation between two people they've never seen before in their life, but maybe that's half the fun of it. The London Underground system, following the rush-hour stampede of getting to the office on time (or if you're late, at least before the boss gets in), leaves the trains looking like King Kong has chewed on them and then spat them back out. Into

Fantastic Voyage stars Raquel Welch in a skin-tight wet-suit.

this debris you come, open up your newspaper/book/magazine and pretend nobody else in the world exists.

It was a morning like this that the two "virtuoso performers" of loud conversation stepped onto the train. Same car, next station up the line.

One was the Talker, clearly a fanatical film buff, and the other the willing Listener. Questions from the captive

audience were not invited.

The whole thing went something like this:

"What? You didn't see *Fantastic Voyage* last night? Didn't get home in time, eh?"

The Listener meekly shakes his head.

"Well, it wasn't a new film. About thirteen years old... made in 1966, I believe. By Fox, you know, 20th Century-Fox. It starred Stephen Boyd, Edmund O'Brien, Donald Pleasance, Arthur Kennedy and — wearing a white, sprayed-on wet suit — Raquel Welch."

The Listener's eyes light up for a second at the mention, and thought, of Raquel Welch in a skin-tight wet suit. The lecture continues.

"It was a science fiction story. Well, sort of science fiction. Instead of all that outer space stuff, this time it was inner space, in a way. You see, there's this important Czech scientist in America who

suffers a serious brain injury after being attacked by enemy agents who want to keep him quiet. His mind is full of all these important things that the Americans want to know. So they take him to a special place they called Combined Miniature Deterrent Forces for an operation on his brain. The trick is, though, that the operation can only be performed from inside the brain. You know, from inside his head."

The Listener looks up and forms an expression that says either "Absurd" or "Wow, great!"

"No, honest, You see, they have a

"They reduce a submarine and inject it into a scientist's body."

highly advanced new way, a new discovery that can shrink men and machines down to any size they want. Now, what they're going to do is shrink down a specially designed submarine and a special crew of experts and inject them all into the scientist's bloodstream. Great, huh? Then the rest of the film shows us the journey this submarine has to take through all the arteries, capillaries, ducts, through the inner ear, and then into the brain itself."

The Listener is now hooked. And so are most of the other people within earshot who also didn't see *Fantastic Voyage*.

"I know the story sounds a bit silly at first. In fact, I did read somewhere, in a book — called *Future Tense*, I think — that if it were actually possible to shrink five people and a submarine down to the size of a human cell, the combined mass would be so concentrated that it would straight away fall through the floor and end up in the centre of the Earth."

The Listener, and everyone else around, casts the Talker a suspicious glance.

"No, honest. I'm telling you that's what it said. Anyway, the crew of this submarine have two problems. Well, actually they have lots of problems but the two big ones are that one of the crew

"When an hour is up the submarine returns to normal size."

is an enemy agent — and we don't know who, yet — and that they have to finish the job and get out in one hour because when their time is up they will automatically return to their normal size. Can you imagine that... a submarine bursting out of a man's head? Well, anyway, they eventually get to the brain and repair the damage — and they find out who the enemy agent is. Maybe I shouldn't tell you. Nah, you'd guess, anyway... it turned out to be Donald Pleasence."

The Listener remains quite calm considering the high-tension of this revelation.

"You should've seen the sets they had. Incredible stuff. I read somewhere once —

I forget where, now — but they built a gigantic model of the heart, and it was the largest working model ever built. It was about forty feet wide and thirty feet high. I also read somewhere that the film's director, Richard Fleischer, said that the whole film took about a year to make. Apparently, one of the biggest problems they had making it was using the wires for the actors to appear as if they're swimming around. Underwater, like, know what I mean? Anyway, with these actors suspended about twenty or thirty feet in the air, pretending to be swimming about, the whole thing became quite dangerous. You see, in order to keep the wires sort of hidden — especially with all those studio lights — they wiped the wires with acid. That way they didn't reflect light. Anyway, what happened was that the acid weakened some of these wires and they kept snapping."

The Listener raises an eyebrow to show that he's impressed with this information.

"You've heard of Richard Fleischer, haven't you? You know... the director. Well, he directed *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* for Disney back 1954. You must know it, it was the one with Kirk Douglas, James Mason and the "Nautilus." Well, anyway he did that one and both films — *20,000 Leagues Under*

know. Did you ever see George Pal's *The Time Machine*? Oh, well, David Duncan did the script for that."

The Listener looks up at the ceiling, as if searching the corners of his mind for a memory of *The Time Machine*.

"Did I tell you that the guys who did the special effects on *Fantastic Voyage* — L. B. Abbot, Art Cruickshank and Emil Kosa Jr — did most of the effects for Irwin Allen, he did *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Towering Inferno*, as well as the *Lost in Space* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* tv series. Come on, you must have seen at least one of them? Oh, well."

Other films about miniaturised people were planned.

The Listener looks away, now feeling as if his life is incomplete.

"I wonder what ever happened to those other films that they were going to make? You know, other films that feature 'miniature people' like *Fantastic Voyage*. There was supposed to have been *The Micronauts*, one of those multi-million dollar epics. Hey, did you know that an early title for *Fantastic Voyage* was *Microscopia*? They were also going to make *Cold War in a Country Garden*, if you remember. *Now* that could've been really good! Oh, by the way, did you notice James Brolin as one of the tech-



the *Sea* and *Fantastic Voyage*, I mean — are similar in many ways, don't you think? Sorry, that's right, you missed *Fantastic Voyage*, didn't you? The film was based on a story by Otto Klement and Jerome Bixby — which was later novelised, you know, turned into a book by Isaac Asimov. Jerome Bixby also wrote the *Mirror, Mirror, By Any Other Name*, *Day of the Dove* and *Requiem for Methuselah* episodes for *Star Trek*. Oh, you didn't see those either, eh? The guy who adapted Klement and Bixby's story was David Duncan. David Duncan, you

nicians in *Fantastic Voyage*? Sorry, that's right, you didn't see the film. Well, anyway, he appeared as one of the technicians. He later turned up in *Westworld*, you know — one of the two guys, the one that got shot. Hey, did you ever see *Westworld*? Now that was good. You see, there's this huge, futuristic pleasure resort and... Hey, here's our station. Come on."

As the train doors open, the Listener turns to his pal and says: "Now I remember *Fantastic Voyage*! Yeah, I've seen it before!"



Opposite: The crew of the miniaturised sub. Above: The special effects were by L.B. Abbot, Art Cruikshank and Emil Kosa Jr. Below: The poster.

OUR MEN AND ONE WOMAN ON
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AND TERRIFYING JOURNEY
OF THEIR LIVES...



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EDMOND O'BRIEN · DONALD PLEASANCE
ARTHUR O'CONNELL · WILLIAM REDFIELD
AND
ARTHUR KENNEDY

PRODUCED BY
SAUL DAVID · RICHARD FLEISCHER
SCREENPLAY BY
HARRY KLEINER · DAVID DUNCA
BASED ON A STORY BY
OTTO KLEMENT AND JAY LEWIS BIXBY

MUSIC BY
LEONARD ROSENMAN



Above: The master of the starship, Cygnus, from *The Black Hole*. Below: The crew of the Enterprise from *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*.

